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Poulenc's Ambivalence:

A Study in Tonality, Musical Style, and Sexuality

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Poulenc's Ambivalence:

A Study in Tonality, Musical Style, and Sexuality

by

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Chapter 1

> " A work of art does not answer questions, it provokes them; and its essential meaning is in the tension between the contradictory answers."
>
> -- Leonard Bernstein

Ambivalence Theory: Definition, Context, and Methodology

Introduction

I would like to begin my study of the musical language of Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) by considering Ned Rorem's description of Poulenc's personality:

> Like his name he was both dapper and ungainly. His clothes came from Lanvin but were unpressed. His hands were scrubbed, but the fingernails were bitten to bone. His physiognomy showed a cross between weasel and trumpet, and featured a large nose through which he wittily spoke. His sun-swept apartment on the Luxembourg Gardens was grandly toned in orange plush, but the floors squeaked annoyingly. His social predilections were for duchesses and policeman, though he was born and lived as a wealthy bourgeois. His villa at Noizay was austere and immaculate, but surrounded by densely careless arbors. There he wrote the greatest vocal music of our century, all of it technically impeccable, and truly vulgar. He was deeply devout and uncontrollably sensual.
>
> In short, his aspect and personality, taste and music each contained contrasts that were not alternating but simultaneous. In a single spoken paragraph he would express terror about a work in progress, hence his need for a pilgrimage to the Black Virgin's Shrine at Rocamadour; his next breath extolled the joys of cruising the Deauville boardwalk. This was no non sequitur but the statement of a whole man always inter-

> locking soul and flesh, sacred and profane; the double awareness of artists and of their emulators, the saints.[1]

Rorem describes Poulenc as a man of constant contradictions. While he wears the most fashionable clothes of the day, his appearance is somewhat disheveled on account of his refusal to keep them looking new—as a wealthy bourgeois he could certainly afford their upkeep. Both his living quarters at the Luxembourg Gardens and at Noizay undermine their opulence, either by squeaking floors or trees in need of a trim. Like his clothes, there is something unsettled at both homes, problems that he could certainly fix if he only chose to do so. His hands are impeccably clean, unsoiled from the toils of the working class, but his bitten to bone fingernails convey constant agitation. As with his wrinkled clothes and domestic disarray, his pristine hands portray a sense of roughness, a contradiction. Turning inwards to his psyche we find another contradiction, between soul and flesh. Poulenc, a devout Catholic and homosexual, made no distinction between making sacred pilgrimages to a holy shrine and cruising the boardwalk for anonymous sex—his sexual predilections leaned toward working class men, men in lower social classes than himself, such as policeman to whom Rorem refers in his description. In each of these instances, Poulenc valorizes opposites, depicting what Rorem aptly calls the 'statement of a whole man.' I understand these to be the statement of a truly ambivalent man.

[1] Ned Rorem, *Settling the Score: Essays on Music* (Anchor Books: New York, 1988), 126.

Rorem likewise describes Poulenc as a composer of contradictions, in that every measure, while sounding on the one hand like sheer Poulenc, can nevertheless be traced back to another composer:

> Poulenc never penned an original note: every measure can be traced to Chopin, or Mussorgsky, or Ravel, or Stravinsky, or even Fauré whom he reviled. Yet every measure can be instantly identified as sheer Poulenc, by that mad touch of personal chutzpah that no critic can define.[2]

But Poulenc himself freely admits his own ambivalence when borrowing from other composers, defusing the critic's claim that his music is unoriginal. He confesses that it is, to some extent, as the following suggestive remark indicates:

> I certainly know that I am not among the musicians who will have been harmonic innovators, like Igor, Ravel or Debussy, but I think there is a place for *new* music, which is happy to use the chords of others. Wasn't this the case with Mozart and Schubert?[3]

Poulenc's music is not typically considered innovative like that of Igor Stravinsky, whom he refers to curiously by first name in his confession – he refers to the other composers by their surnames. But like Mozart and Schubert before him, composers who built on established musical practices, Poulenc also builds on the musical styles, thematic materials, and even tonal structures of other

[2] Ned Rorem, *LIES: A Diary, 1986-1999* (Counterpoint: Washington D.C., 2000), 15.
[3] Poulenc, as quoted in Keith Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* (UMI Research Press: Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982), 75.

composers, and forges them into something truly his own, akin to an alchemist's transformation of material into something unimaginable and *new*.

My study of the music of Francis Poulenc will take seriously certain types of encoded ambivalences, an umbrella term that will allow me to think about Poulenc's music in many different ways. Like the man himself, I will argue that his music is saturated in contradictions. In the next chapter I will consider the notes themselves as a starting point and will suggest that his music has certain correspondences with the style of cubism, an aesthetic most often associated with painting. My discussion of his *Mouvements Perpétuels* (1918) will illustrate how his tonal ambivalence, stemming from irresolvable third-related tonalities, can account for large-scale structure, musical syntax, and enigmatic harmonies. In the subsequent chapter I will continue to explore tonal ambivalence in his *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor (1932), in which I will also consider Poulenc's ambivalence toward high and low culture in general, as well as his ambivalence toward the aesthetics of Jean Cocteau in particular. In the final chapter I will consider Poulenc's ambivalence toward his own sexual identity, which takes form in his tonal ambivalence, and is expressed in two separate works: namely, his ballet, *Aubade* (1929) and the *Concerto for Two Pianos*. I argue that irresolvable tensions lie at the heart of many of Poulenc's compositions, and it is because of such structured contradictions, both musical and extra-musical, that his music will

continue to hold resonance for future listeners. Rorem, sensing the importance of Poulenc's emotional ambivalence, writes:

> if happy and sad are two sides of one coin, never has the metal been more unalloyed than when tossed in Poulenc's palm. Heads or tails, he is now almost always a winner, not, I contend, because he gladdens our hearts, but because the so contagiously seductive frivolity of his music is, like the man himself, fundamentally melancholy. Were this not so, it is doubtful that such giddy sounds could have so staunchly prevailed.[4]

The notion that Poulenc's musical legacy consists of giddy sounds that are fundamentally melancholic further underscores Poulenc as a composer of contradictions. In order to build a frame for my study of Poulenc's ambivalence in general, and develop a generalized theory of ambivalence in particular, I am now going to turn my attention to Leonard Bernstein's lecture series, "The Unanswered Question," in which he provides a model to understand the musical and cultural context for Poulenc's ambivalent music in early twentieth-century Paris.

Bernstein's *The Unanswered Question*

In his Norton lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1973, Leonard Bernstein borrowed the title for his series of talks from Charles Ives' "The Unanswered Question" (1908).[5] Throughout these six lectures Bernstein

[4] Rorem, *Settling the Score*, 146.
[5] Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976).

eloquently addresses Ives' enigmatic title by posing a purely musical question of his own: "Whither music in our century?" In his introduction, for instance, Bernstein states:

> And so the purpose of these six lectures is not so much to answer the question as to understand it, to redefine it. Even to guess at the answer to "whither music?" we must first ask Whence music? What music? And Whose music? It would be pretentious to assume that by the end of this series we will answer the ultimate question; but it is reasonable to assume that we will be in a better position to make some educated guesses.[6]

Throughout the lectures Bernstein teases out connections between music and language by appropriating ideas from Noam Chomsky's *Language and Mind*. This interdisciplinary approach foreshadows the critical impulse of later music theory that addresses such topics as musical phonology, syntax, and semantics, the building blocks of musical language.

In his fourth Norton lecture, Bernstein turns his focus to the aesthetic of ambiguity and traces its use as a compositional technique throughout different musical eras, culminating in its use in the twentieth century, what he will refer to in his fifth lecture as "The Twentieth-Century Crisis." But what precisely does Bernstein mean by musical ambiguity, a term that in itself is rather *ambiguous*. The ambiguity arises from two distinct meanings of the prefix *ambi-*, which can signify "around-ness" as well as "both-ness." [7] Bernstein shows via Webster two

[6] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 5.
[7] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 193-195.

distinct definitions for "ambiguous": (1) doubtful or uncertain especially from obscurity or indistinctness (i.e., eyes of an ambiguous color) and (2) capable of being understood in two or more possible senses or ways. He next prunes the ambiguousness of the term by focusing solely on the second definition and the notion of "both-ness," which he demonstrates to be equivalent to the notion of "two-ness" in music (i.e., upbeat and downbeat, strong and weak, diatonic and chromatic, among others). He even clarifies the second definition by deleting a portion of it, the ambiguous two or more, which now gives the definition in its final form: ambiguous—capable of being understood in two possible senses or ways.

Once the muddle of the definition has been tidied up, Bernstein persuasively illustrates that the aesthetic of ambiguity lies at the compositional core of many works from the classical period. For instance, in the first movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, he illustrates how phrasal ambiguity is perfectly contained within classical proportions of the sonata form.[8] He also accounts for certain tonal procedures in the movement, such as the chromatic second theme, as being contained within the framework of tonic-dominant relationships.[9] In both cases, according to Bernstein, the beauty of ambiguity resides in the juxtaposition of two contradictory forces that operate at the same time: that is, chromatic wandering (pitch or, metaphorically speaking,

[8] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 86-115.
[9] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 41-45.

rhythmic) firmly supported by classical control. He also suggests that this duality is in itself ambiguous in that we can orient our listening in two rather different ways. For instance, in his discussion of the Adagietto from Mahler's Fifth Symphony we could orient our listening via the contained chromaticism, or, we could focus our listening instead on the containing diatonicism.[10] Bernstein also points out that the movement contains other types of ambiguities, such as vagueness of beat, meter, and even tonality itself, highlighting the aesthetic of ambiguity as one of the most salient characteristics of romantic music in the nineteenth century.

He likewise cautions on the possible risks of ambiguity as a compositional aesthetic, stating: "By the time the [nineteenth] century is finished this epidemic increase will have brought us to Webster's other definition of ambiguity – sheer vagueness. And that's where the aesthetic delights of ambiguity start turning into dangers."[11] The dangers to which Bernstein refers can be found in the highly chromatic music of the Wagner-Strauss period, a Germanic style that many non-German composers sought to distance themselves from in the first part of the twentieth century.[12] Elliott Antokoletz, for instance, identifies the significance of

[10] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 197-201.
[11] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 201.
[12] On p. 238 in *The Unanswered Question*, Bernstein asks rhetorically: "But how ambiguous can you get before the clarity of musical meaning is lost altogether? How far can music romp through these new chromatic fields without finding itself in uncharted terrain, in a wild forest of sharps and flats?" And on p. 266 he similarly asks: "But how big, how chromatically ambiguous, how syntactically overstuffed can you become without collapsing of your own sheer weight?" Throughout his lectures, especially in "The Twentieth-Century Crisis," Bernstein sounds anxious about an Ultimate Ambiguity that is not tonally contained.

an emergence of national styles free from the hegemony of German music and its culture. He pinpoints both France and Russia, among others, as representative countries that looked toward their own national treasures of literature, the arts, and folklore in order to cultivate a musical aesthetic free from the German late-romantic musical styles.[13] In order to narrow my cultural frame, and therefore establish a contextual basis for my study of Francis Poulenc, I will continue to trace the aesthetic of ambiguity into France as expressed in symbolist poetry as well as impressionist paintings. Both ambiguous styles will then be shown to have parallels in the music of Claude Debussy (1862-1918), a composer, according to Poulenc, "who gave [him] the taste for writing music."[14]

After the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), which France lost to Prussia, Paris became an important cultural and artistic center, ushering in a new era in French art. Certain poets, such as Baudelaire, LaForgue, Moréas, Regnier, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Maeterlinck reacted to the preceding era's predilection for realism and naturalism, stemming from the Positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte. Their poetic style, known as symbolism, no longer approached reality in an objective or calculated manner, but rather expressed the outside world by means of symbolic representations of sounds and rhythms. There was no longer a need for syntactical clarity, or logical continuity, as the

[13] Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music* (Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1992), 77.
[14] Rorem, *Settling the Score*, 136.

poets sought to evoke intoxicating, dreamlike worlds, as in the one exquisitely created by Mallarmé in his poem, *l´Après-midi d´un Faune* – the *Afternoon of a Faun*. Bernstein addresses Mallarmé's aesthetic of ambiguity in the following manner:

> the images and symbols pile up in such alliterative profusion, with such seeming irrelevance and incongruity, that, reading it, we often feel awash in sound, ravishing sound to be sure, but we feel equally at sea as far as comprehension is concerned…it's a case of phonology threatening to take over at the expense of meaning—and in fact to produce a semantics of its own.[15]

He thus focuses his attention on examples of poetic ambiguity associated with the faun's dreamlike imagery, and illustrates how the enigmatic poem can be read as a "dream-within-a-dream," all the while being contained in classical structural forms of Alexandrine rhymed couplets and strict hexameters.[16] The following quotation by Bernstein is rather lengthy, but it is necessary to show his understanding of conflicting forces at work in the Mallarmé poem. It begins with two lines from the poem, as the faun recalls the dream:

> *Sans marquer par quel art ensemble détala*
> *Trop d´Hymen souhaité de qui cherche le* la.
> Literally translated, and therefore even fuzzier in meaning, the lines say: "Without noticing by what art there ran off together too much Hymen desired by him who is seeking A-natural." I won't even try to interpret that further; I would

[15] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 253.
[16] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 255.

> like only to point out that the word "la", meaning the note A, stands at the end of a line where it rhymes identically with the last word of the preceding line, "détala", meaning "ran off." And I am asking if it's not therefore possible that the symbolic word "la" was born phonologically rather than syntactically, that it was motivated by its inherence in the earlier word "détala", which, coming so soon after the musical idea of "Prelude", in turn suggested the musical association of "la"? I'll try to ask it more clearly: might it not be that the "la" image was created *not* because the poet had intended to invoke it – because he had some meaningful idea in mind and was looking for a structural way of saying it – but rather that the image was *phonologically* suggested in the preceding line? And I am proposing that this is only one of hundreds of such creative mechanisms in this poem, all examples of phonological impulse operating at the expense of semantic clarity.[17]

Bernstein's persuasive argument highlights that Mallarmé is ultimately "fenced in" by classical structures, and in this case, by the rhymed couplet of *détala* and *le la.*

In his musical adaptation of Mallarmé's poem, Debussy is also able (if only barely) to contain ambiguity by classically conceived "fences." According to Bernstein, Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (1894) crystallized at a moment of particular stress in the evolution of music and embodies one of the last-ditch stands of tonal and syntactic containment.[18] Bernstein suggests that we can understand Debussy's *Faun* as an essay on E major, where points of repose build "tonal fences" of closely related keys, such as E major (I), B major (V), A major (IV), and F♯ major (II). These fences ultimately keep the music from

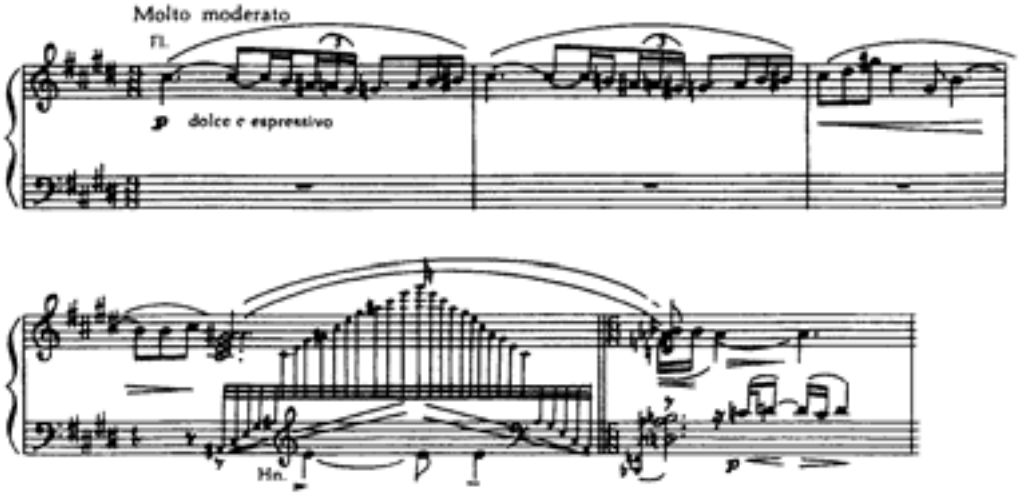
[17] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 253-255.
[18] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 239.

slipping into fenceless chromaticism and total ambiguity.[19] The flute's opening dreamy passage highlights the contradictory forces of chromaticism and diatonicism at work, but it is by no means apparent, not yet at least, that E major is the most salient tonality. It is only suggested, possibly as if in a dream, by the E-major arpeggiation in the third measure. The E-major tonality is immediately undermined by a negation of a tonic-dominant relationship in the passage, replaced instead by the interval of the tritone, an interval that bluntly contradicts the basic concept of diatonic tonality. That is, rather than culminating the opening phrase on the dominant seventh of E, as we classically expect him to, Debussy misses the mark by a half step, culminating instead on the dominant seventh of E♭ (see Example 1.1).

The interval of the tritone initially stems from the melodic poles of C♯5 and G4 that frame the opening gesture. Later, Debussy will fill in this interval by means of whole steps, (C♯ D♯ F G) and (G A B C♯), thus creating a symmetrical scale that is an alien presence in tonal frameworks because of its inability to produce tonic/dominant relationships. Instead, the whole-tone scale divides the octave at the exact midpoint, the tritone, and in this case C♯4 – ***G4*** – C♯5. The interval of the tritone occurs frequently throughout the work and clouds the ending and its associated tonality of E major. The rhetorical effect of this passage is none other than a plagal cadence, or better known as an Amen cadence, widely

[19] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 238-259.

Example 1.1
Debussy, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, measures 1-5



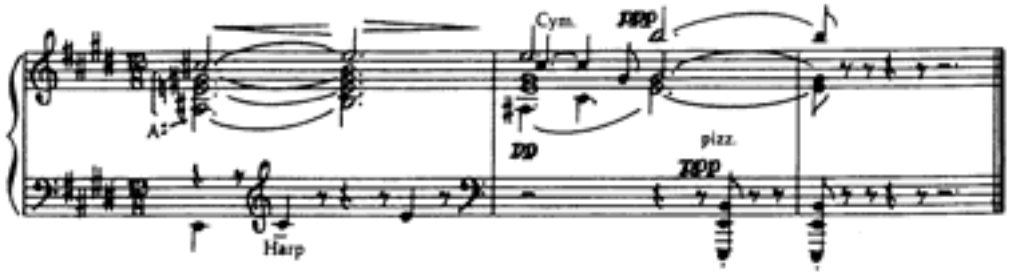
associated with church chorales. Debussy's version has a twist, however, because of, as Bernstein puts it, "…the tritonic A♯, and so his Amens come out a bit mistier, more ambiguous, but Amens nonetheless, and perfectly consistent with the tritone principle that has been operative since the very first bar."[20] (See Example 1.2.) Due to the "fenceless" direction in which the music seemed to be headed, on account of the ambiguousness caused by dense chromaticism and non-diatonic tonal syntax, the first American audience labeled Debussy's *Faun* as

[20] Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, 259.

"crazy modern music," but it was only a precursor to the crisis that was yet to come.[21]

Example 1.2

Debussy, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, ♯IV-I Amen cadences



Like the Symbolist poets, the Impressionist painters also turned away from historically related subjects and focused instead on the fleeting effects of light and color in nature.[22] In essence, such painters as Monet, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, Degas, Manet, and Cézanne sought to capture their initial impression of an object by means of juxtaposing small planes of color in order to create vibrant surfaces. The following words by D. S. MacColl provide an eloquent description of the impressionist aesthetic in general, and Monet's treatment of water reflections in particular:

[21] See Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question*, Chapter 5, for his discussion of "The Twentieth-Century Crisis," where he explores the Schoenberg/Stravinsky polemic.
[22] Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 81.

> When landscape is mirrored in water, the forms of trees, buildings, and other objects are not only simplified and broadened, but inverted and distorted, for in any troubling of the surface by ripple or wave the water is broken up into a series of mirrors tilted at different angles and with various degrees of convexity and concavity. Into the shivering fragments of these elongated, shortened, and twisted images of objects on the bank are worked kaleidoscopically bits of sky and cloud, and this undulating hash of half-coherent forms which we can gaze at almost as abstract colour and tone gives the nearest [approach] to the dream of an art that should be a play of colour only. Something of this state of mind Monet applied to his seeing of unreflected objects, treating trees, for example, by loose groups [of] touches that indicate roughly the place of reflected and transmitted lights and shadows.[23]

MacColl's choice of descriptive terms, such as half-coherent forms, abstract color, and dream-like art, evoke strong parallels with Webster's first definition of ambiguity: namely, "doubtful or uncertain especially from obscurity or indistinctness."

Antokoletz points out that the transposition of the impressionist aesthetic into music has been credited, rather surprisingly, to Erik Satie, a French composer who is generally associated not with the aesthetic of impressionism, but instead with the empirical aesthetic of neoclassicism.[24] In a lecture, Satie made the following claim: "I explained to Debussy the need a Frenchman has to free himself from the Wagnerian venture, which didn't respond to our natural

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[23] William C. Seitz, "Claude Monet: Seasons and Moments," in *Readings in Art History*, Third Edition, Harold Spencer, ed. (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York City, New York, 1983), 333-356.

[24] Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 244.

aspirations…Why could we not use the means that Claude Monet, Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec and others had made known? Why could we not transpose these means into music?"[25] Satie's statement draws our attention to the Frenchman's desire to distance himself from the musical style of Germany, and the style of Wagner in particular, and look instead toward his own cultural heritage for sources of inspiration, and in this case, the impressionistic style of Monet, Cézanne, and Toulouse-Lautrec. To take but one musical example, out of countless many, Debussy's second prelude for piano, titled, appropriately enough, *Voiles* (1910), refers either to "sails" or "veils," with the latter evoking the ambiguousness of a "veil" of mist.[26] It is not difficult to hear impressionistic ambiguity in the composition; the musical texture reflects the sheer vagueness of a mist-like ambience by its mosaic-like layers, and the delicately elaborated figurations, as well as the irregular rhythmic patterns and obscure thematic linearity. This type of ambiguity, which exquisitely (or what Bernstein might call *dangerously*) borders on sheer vagueness, differs from the previous cases of musical ambiguity that we have surveyed thus far in that it is created by means of textural and rhythmic play entirely dislocated from a classically conceived source. Moreover, the aesthetic of ambiguity in Debussy's impressionistic *Voiles* is no longer tied to the underpinnings of sonata form or tonic-dominant relationships.

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[25] Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936; rev. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1963), 47.
[26] Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 88.

Open Works and The Aesthetic of Ambivalence

It is with the first type of ambiguity, what I will refer to as classical ambiguity on account of its association with various classical schemata, that I see the point of departure for another type of musical aesthetic in early twentieth-century France: namely, the aesthetic of ambivalence. (We should remember that classical ambiguity stems from Webster's second definition: capable of being understood in two possible senses or ways.) As we have seen, in classical ambiguity the two possible meanings do not ultimately threaten the need for structural coherence because ambiguity is always enclosed or fenced in. On the other hand, the aesthetic of ambivalence revels in its play between possible meanings – that is, ambivalence defies closure; it is the signature of the open work.

As a term, ambivalence has had a relatively short life. Eugen Bleuler first introduced the term in 1911, and suggested three types of ambivalence: the emotional (or affective) type in which the same object arouses both positive and negative feelings, as in love/hate parent-child relations; the voluntary type in which conflicting feelings make it difficult or impossible to decide how to act; and the intellectual (or cognitive) type, in which contradictory ideas are expressed.[27] Webster provides two similar definitions for ambivalence: (1) simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings (as attraction and repulsion)

[27] Robert K. Morton, *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), 3.

toward an object, person, or action, and (2) a) a continual fluctuation (as between one thing and its opposite), and b) uncertainty as to which approach to follow. Both ambiguity, as defined by Bernstein, and ambivalence share crucial parallels in that both terms suggest uncertainty or vagueness on account of two possible meanings. However, ambivalence differs from what I have labeled as classical ambiguity in that its meaning stems from the tensions between the contradictory or opposite meanings that are not enclosed by the work (or the author), but are ultimately left open as valid options. With this in mind, let us turn our attention to Satie's masterpiece, *Parade* (1917), an ambivalent work that would profoundly influence Poulenc's musical path.

The ballet's scenario, written by Jean Cocteau, takes place outside a fairground booth where French and American Managers aggressively attempt to persuade a crowd of onlookers to come inside the theater. The Managers introduce three Music-Hall numbers, which are only supposed to be vehicles that will entice the crowd, but instead the acts are mistaken for the actual show itself, much to the dismay of the Managers. The following description by Cocteau evokes a kind of ante-theater to a carnival show:

> At Country Fairs it is usual for a dancer or acrobat to give a performance in front of the booth in order to attract people to the turnstiles. The same idea, brought up-to-date and treated with accentuated realism, underlies the Ballet "Parade."
>
> The scene represents a Sunday Fair in Paris. There is a traveling Theatre, and three Music Hall turns are employed as Parade. There are the Chinese Conjuror, and American Girl, and a pair of Acrobats.

> Three Managers are occupied in advertising the show. They tell each other that the crowd in front is confusing the outside performance with the show which is about to take place within, and they try, in the crudest fashion, to induce the public to come and see the entertainment within, but the crowd remains unconvinced. After the last performance the Managers make another effort, but the Theatre remains empty. The Chinaman, the Acrobats, and the American Girl, seeing that the Managers have failed, make a last appeal on their own account. But it is too late.[28]

In his critical commentary on *Parade*, Daniel Albright suggests that the ballet can be read as a giant loop, a non-teleological work that amounts to a ballet where nothing whatsoever has happened.[29] By focusing on a specific emblem in the ballet, the whorls in the Chinese Conjuror's costume and the giant white apostrophes in the male Acrobat's costume, Albright demonstrates how visual aids can corroborate actions in the ballet. For instance, Léonide Massine, who performed the role of the Chinese Conjuror, describes his act as follows:

> Cocteau…suggested that I should go through the motions of swallowing an egg. The idea appealed to me. With an elaborate flourish I pretended to produce an egg from my sleeve and put it in my mouth. When I had mimed the action of swallowing it, I stretched out my arms, slid my left leg sidewards [*sic*] till I was almost sitting down, and with my left hand pretended to pull the egg from the toe of my shoe.[30]

The act of swallowing, digesting, and undigesting an egg relies on the magician's illusion of making real the reversibility of irreversible things. One needs only to

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[28] Jean Cocteau, as quoted in Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago, Il: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 189-190.
[29] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 185-197.
[30] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 190.

think further of the magician's cutting-up of paper into pieces, or, one of my favorites from childhood, the sawing-in-half of a lady, which both are re-produced in their original form by the trick's end. Albright describes the magician's illusions not as events in themselves, but rather as parodies of events, a convoluted demonstration by which, like the scenario of *Parade*, nothing whatsoever has happened.

Likewise, Satie's musical score evokes an anti-teleological quality, that – borrowing Roger Shattuck's idea – progresses by standing still.[31] After examining both action-less action and circular visual emblems in the ballet, Albright extends his thesis of circularity by illustrating musical loops associated with the Chinese Conjuror. But rather than seeing a coordinated synthesis between the action of the Conjuror and his associated music, Albright views both as occupying separate theatrical spaces (or planes) where both are stuck in their own, alienated, perpetual cycles.

Along with the planes of conjuring and music, a supposed third plane of spoken text written by Cocteau was to have been performed, but never was, by a carnival barker during Massine's pantomime:

> A-WELL-INFORMED-MAN-IS-WORTH-TWO!
> IF-you-want-to become-rich. IF-you-feel-sick-IF-you-
> feel-tired
> Enter-see-the-Chinese-wisdom-the missionaries-the dentists-

[31] Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France, 1885 to World War I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 140.

the plague-the gold-the gongs.
The-pigs-that-eat-little-children-the emporer-of-China-in-his-armchair.
The-people-who-did-not-participate-at-the beginning-of-the-show-can-remain-seated
Enter-see THE KING OF DRAMAS-THE GREAT SUCCESS OF LAUGHTER AND FEAR.[32]

Thus, the theater inside, and not the parade outside, is where unimaginable wonders and terrors await. The empty loops of conjuring and music are signs of the emptiness of the world of advertising, a no man's land between common life (where you're sick, tired, and broke!) and the monstrous thrill of the freak show within.[33] Furthermore, Cocteau had hoped that the occult-like theater would penetrate (and infect) the ensuing parade; in Satie's autographed copy of the score, for instance, at five bars after Rehearsal 15, suppressed words are written: "They gouge out his eyes, tear out his tongue." Later in the score there is even an indication for a howl, a testament, as Albright points out, to the monstrous torturing of the missionary inside the theater.

Albright reads *Parade* as a buffer between the expressionist spectacle inside the theater and the audience outside. The following words by Cocteau suggest that he conceived the ballet as a sort of deconstruction of a Stravinsky ballet:

> For most artists, a work wouldn't know how to be beautiful without an intrigue of mysticism, of love, or of annoyance. The short, the gay, the sad without any idyllic quality, are suspect. The hypocritical

[32] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 194-195.
[33] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 195.

> elegance of the Chinese Conjuror, the melancholy of the Little Girl's steamboats, the touching silliness of the Acrobats, everything that has remained a dead letter for *Parade*'s audience, would have pleased it if the Acrobat had loved the Little Girl and had been killed by the jealous conjuror, killed in turn by the Acrobat's wife, or any of thirty-six other dramatic combinations.[34]

There are obvious connections between Satie's *Parade* and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* (1911) in that both ballets share a conjuror, an Oriental entertainer, and various other carnival performers. But unlike the scenario of *Parade*, where each character inhabits his or her own constituent space, the characters in *Petrushka* are caught up in a conventional love triangle. On the contrary, Albright suggests that with the sounds of the Great War echoing in Paris in 1917, *Parade* brilliantly cultivated a sense of apathy toward terror, and provided a method of dealing with war by means of cultivated ambivalence.

In the following quote, Albright compares the ballet to Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909), an expressionist monodrama that deals with a woman's rage as she discovers her lover's murdered body in a forest:

> In the whole context of the twentieth century, *Parade* looks like a kind of machine for neutralizing *Erwartung*, for demoting its expressive extremities to suppressed backstage cries: Satie found music that regards torture with urbane aplomb. *Erwartung* aspires to catharsis, to exhaustion through emotional saturation; but *Parade* is a stringently self-limiting domain, in which smooth, impenetrable sound-hunks disengage themselves from all need to evolve or to fit into models of cognitive or perceptual activity. It is a theatre-city walled up against unwanted feelings, so completely sealed that the missionary's shrieks were deleted

[34] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 195.

> from the text before the first performance. Perhaps *Parade* is what *Erwartung* sounds like with its tongue torn out: sort of gesturing—mute, but not silent—at zones of human experience that defy expression.[35]

In the self-limiting domain of *Parade*, three themes are mingled. First, there is the positioning outside the theater of the audience, who is actually cognizant of the real show inside due to the manager's hysterical ballyhoos. *Parade* can thus be read as a critique of consumer culture in that the audience will always want "something," and in this case free entertainment, "for nothing!" Second, the ballet mirrors itself with perpetual loops, from the action-less action of the performers, to the icons of the whorls and apostrophes that continuously turn back in on themselves, to the music that evokes permanent movement as well as permanent rest. The ballet is therefore completely entrenched with dramatic ambivalence, non-teleological action on all artistic planes. This can account for why the first audience was completely dumbfounded by what they had just seen, or, perhaps, did *not* see: no murder, no mayhem, and certainly no catharsis. Third, the ballet cultivates apathy toward terror by eliminating the horrors both inside and outside the theater, perhaps a snobbish deconstruction of earlier works, like *Petrushka* and *Erwartung*, that left nothing to the *imagination* of the audience. I understand this to be the critical problem of the ballet: it remains an open work because of its refusal to be limited to only one meaning. We, the audience, are invited to take part in its unfolding (and timeless) drama. In a way,

[35] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 195-196.

the parade allows us to stand at a safe distance from unimaginable terrors of the world; the parade absorbs our fears, allowing us to dream impossible and unimaginable stories for our own lives.

Chapter 2

> "Cubism is no longer just a style of painting but also the expression of a living whole…it can leave the hidden laboratories of the studios and escape the problematic geometry of painting."
>
> --Pierre Cabanne, on the role of cubism in *Parade*

Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuels*: A Case for Musical Cubism

Among the major composers of the twentieth century, Francis Poulenc has received less than his fair share of analytical attention. Too often his early music, especially music from his first stylistic period (1917-1922), has fallen prey to superficial analysis where surface details are highlighted and generalized, but little attempt has been made to uncover deep structural features. Keith Daniel, for instance, describes Poulenc's first stylistic period as maintaining a carefree, flippant attitude, a thin, linear texture, a repetitive accompaniment, and a popular atmosphere, representing the circus, café-concert, and music hall.[36] These characteristics describe Poulenc's early music as rather playful, not to be taken too seriously, which can begin to explain why scholars have thus far concentrated their attention solely on surface generalizations. In addition, Poulenc's early

[36] Keith W. Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982).

music has come to represent the ideals of "Les Six" more fully than that of any of its other members. And on account of his association with neo-classicism, especially concerning the music from his second stylistic period (1923-1935), it has been far too easy to pigeon hole his compositional technique as merely traditional and therefore unworthy of serious criticism. However, recent criticism has begun to shed much needed new light on Poulenc's compositional style by examining cultural influences on his music, such as his musical adaptation of the aesthetic of surrealism.[37] Considering the role of cultural influences on Poulenc's music makes sense from a purely biographical reason since Poulenc is ultimately a self-taught composer. Unlike other members of "Les Six," who studied in more traditional academic settings, Poulenc's window into the art of composition is really through the act of imitation, whether it be from musical, literary, or painting techniques and styles. In short, Poulenc's early stylistic period can be thought of as stemming from two distinct sources, the first being avant-garde composers, such as Igor Stravinsky and Erik Satie, and the second, avant-garde painters, such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The focus in this chapter, which considers Poulenc's unique approach to tonality in his *Mouvements Perpétuels* (1918), a piano work dating from his first stylistic period, will examine Poulenc's music through the lens of cubism, an aesthetic most often associated with painting.

[37] See Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Cubism has received much attention in recent years as an aesthetic influence on a wide range of disciplines, such as architecture, literature, and poetry; yet, little focus has been given to its relationship with music.[38] The emphasis on cubist principles may allow us to question certain assumptions that have been made toward Poulenc's early musical style. Most Poulenc scholars have agreed that his music is tonal and functional, but Poulenc's working out of tonality merits more detailed attention. For instance, some critics have chalked Poulenc's use of tonality as following a "game of modulation," but the rules needed to play such a tonal game have been unfortunately ignored. When discussing tonal relationships in Poulenc's music, Keith Daniel writes, " there is no emphasis…on a strong tonal scheme in Poulenc's music, but rather a feeling that keys must change frequently and flexibly to accommodate the variety of moods and themes."[39] And likewise, Henri Hell, the first authoritative biographer of Poulenc, adds, "it is to these delicate and subtle relationships of tonalities that Poulenc's music owes a great part of its harmonic sensuousness."[40] Hell seems on the right track here with the subtle idea of a synthesis of tonalities culminating in harmonic sensuousness, suggesting a blurring of tonalities akin to the blurring of objects and space, or mass and void, in cubist paintings. But before exploring

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[38] Glenn Watkins devotes a chapter in his *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994) to "Stravinsky and the Cubists," in which he details the composer's relationships to the cubist painters and provides a cubist interpretation of his *Three Pieces for String Quartet*, no. 1.
[39] Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 85.
[40] Hell, as quoted in Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 86.

cubist theories and their possible connection with Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuels*, I need to first draw a historical and contextual framework of Paris in the early twentieth century.

A Parisian Banquet of the Arts

Many writers have examined the relationship between the arts in early twentieth-century France. Roger Shattuck, for instance, notes that the development of the avant-garde in Paris between 1885 and 1918 must accommodate such seemingly diverse artists as Henri Rousseau (a painter), Erik Satie (a musician), Alfred Jarry (a poet), and Guillaume Apollinaire (a poet).[41] Elliott Antokoletz corroborates Shattuck's view by pointing out that Parisian artists "may be considered to be associated with each other by their common orientation to a particular source of inspiration or some broader aesthetic."[42] This broader aesthetic, or what Apollinaire referred to as the "new spirit," can be attributed in the arts as a reaction against out-of-date *–isms*, such as German romanticism and even French impressionism.

Nancy Perloff notes that the writer Jean Cocteau proclaimed himself to be the impresario for this new artistic movement with the publication of his

[41] Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant Garde in France, 1885 to World War I* (New York: Random House, 1955).
[42] Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1992), 243.

manifesto, *The Cock and the Harlequin*, in 1918.[43] According to Perloff, Cocteau praised such modern styles as Italian futurism and French cubism, both of which broke free from hallowed traditions. Cocteau valorized the Futurist principles of speed, instinct, and surprise, which embodied aspects of modern urban life. Likewise, Cocteau recognized in cubism a different order of reality, an order articulated by the juxtaposition of common elements forced into uncommon relationships and perspectives. Both modern styles crystallized in the ballet *Parade*, an artistic collaboration between Cocteau (libretto), Satie (music), Picasso (set design), and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. The following account by Apollinaire highlights the importance of *Parade* as the first cubist spectacle:

> *Parade* [said Apollinaire] brings together Satie's first piece of orchestral writing, Picasso's first stage designs, Massine's first choreography, and the first attempt, for a poet, to express himself on several different levels.
>
> Massine and Picasso have realized this ballet by perfecting, for the first time, that alliance of painting and the dance, of the plastic and the mimic arts, which symbolizes the advent of an art complete in itself. We hope that the public will look on *Parade* as a work that hides poetry beneath its crude Punch and Judy wrapping.[44]

Apollinaire's first-hand description underscores the cubic correspondences between dance and painting, but curiously ignores their relationship to Satie's

[43] Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7.
[44] James Harding, *The Ox on the Roof: Scenes from musical life in Paris in the twenties* (London: Macdonald and Company, 1972), 36.

music. Antokoletz, however, notes that the revolutionary stage work was the first example of cubism in music as well as dance, thus establishing an important link between *all* the arts – that is, painting/music/dance—under a common aesthetic, or the Parisian "new spirit."[45] Daniel Albright, in his study on modernism in music, likewise writes on the relationships, or artistic alliances, between Picasso's cubic set designs/costumes and the cubic metaphors in Satie's music, which Daniel sees as stemming from angular (or box-like) patterns that are repeated in groups of four throughout the score.[46]

Similarly, Alan Gillmor has focused on a detailed analysis of the musical texture of *Parade*.[47] He observes that its texture consists of layers of mechanically repeated patterns that evolve in a disconnected succession of small block-like sections, which he then draws comparisons with the cubist planes and blocks of Picasso's sets and costumes. In short, the "cubic" spirit of *Parade* ultimately gave Cocteau and company an avant-garde banner to wave against French impressionism, which he interpreted as being anti-French on account of its "misty haze" stemming from the German romanticism of Wagner. For Cocteau, both impressionism and romanticism represented "hazy music," subjective music that had the ability to devour its audience as an 'octopus devours its prey.' In contrast, Satie's emphasis on melodic simplicity and clarity in *Parade* marked the

[45] Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 246.
[46] Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 202-207.
[47] Alan M. Gillmor, *Erik Satie* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988).

beginning of a French music emancipated from both German romantic and French impressionistic influences, and Francis Poulenc, an impressionable eighteen-year-old at its first performance, was profoundly influenced by *Parade*'s cubist styles and techniques.

Wilfred Mellers suggests that Satie's directionless oscillations and clearly defined melodies in *Parade* can be found in Poulenc's early works of 1917-1921.[48] Not surprisingly Mellers writes that the rallying-cry in the visual arts during the "era of *Parade*" was cubism, noting that Satie's integration of splintered fragments and planes correlate with the cubist painter's search for geometric logic. Unfortunately, Mellers does not utilize his aesthetic claim of cubism's significance in his own analysis of Poulenc's music, nor does he develop a musical analogue to geometric logic beyond surface generalizations in Satie's music. I will return to this point below in my cubist interpretation of Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuels*.

Keith Daniel recounts the important role that Ricardo Viñes, Poulenc's first piano teacher during his teen-aged years, had on Poulenc's development as a pianist and as a composer. During their lessons, the two would not only talk about contemporary music, but they would also discuss contemporary styles of poetry and painting. Viñes also introduced the young Poulenc to Stravinsky, Satie, Apollinaire, Diaghilev, and Picasso, all members of the fashionable Parisian

[48] Wilfrid Mellers, *Francis Poulenc* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xvii.

avant-garde. The adoration that Poulenc had for Picasso has been documented by many writers (see especially Buckland[49] and Daniel), and Poulenc's devotion to the cubist pioneer is made evident in an artistic manifesto he helped issue in 1917, entitled "Hommage to Picasso," which expressed admiration for Picasso and thanked him for being a leader of young artists.[50] I will now briefly survey both theories and applications of cubism as applied to painting, after which I will explore possible cubist connections with Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuels*.

Defining the Aesthetic of Cubism

I will give a brief history of cubism and examine three cubist paintings in order to frame a contextual basis for their common principles with Poulenc's early musical style. Cubist painting is considered to have passed through two stages, the first being *analytical* cubism (1905-1911), and the second, *synthetic* cubism (1911-1920).[51] During the analytical stage, the building blocks of cubism were established, allowing the painters to express the outside world in geometric schemes and cubes. It is in the first stage where conventional reality is rejected in favor of a "truer" reality by offering a radical new way to perceive an object from all sides at once, thus giving the "totality" of the image as it appeared to the

[49] Sidney Buckland, *Francis Poulenc: Selected Correspondence, 1915-1963* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1991).
[50] Daniel, *Francis Poulenc*, 13.
[51] My discussion of the history of cubism is influenced by Gerald Kamber's *Max Jacob and the Poetics of Cubism* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1971).

painter's intellect. Analytical cubism thus signified a representation of the *intellectual* concept of objects and not the ephemeral sensations of the painters, so closely associated with impressionism. In addition, the painters, in the interest of the overall pictorial structure, violated the forms of the objects at will, thus suggesting a dichotomy on the one hand between a *representation* of the object, and on the other, the possibility for *abstraction*. Max Kozloff puts it this way: "in cubism, pictorial forms were considered systematically meaningful visualizations of an interior knowledge of reality derived by the painter from the complex aggregate of his perceptions. The typical metaphor of Cubist doctrine, therefore, was not of mystical emergence [as for the Symbolists], but of ordered comparison and judgment."[52] Kozloff's depiction of cubism underscores the painter's search for an essential, empirical truth of an object through detailed investigation.

In the second stage of synthetic cubism the picture was no longer split apart or "analyzed" as in the first stage; rather, it was now subjectively summarized becoming a newly created aesthetic object in itself. Synthetic cubism is regarded as more abstract than analytical cubism, which might seem to suggest a contradiction with its empirical roots. Even though the cubists themselves viewed their finished paintings in both stages of cubism as products of rational thought, synthetic cubism negates the ordered clarity of analytical cubism by depicting a highly enigmatic presentation of an object, as we will see below in

[52] Max Kozloff, *Cubism/Futurism* (New York: Charterhouse, 1973), 9.

Picasso's *Man with Violin* (1912). Moreover, the object was now intertwined with its own form often beyond any recognizable features or references to reality, or as Juan Gris put it: "the analysis of yesterday has become a synthesis by the expression of the relationships between the objects themselves."[53]

Lynn Gamwell writes that the cubist's way of perceiving an image could be accomplished by fusing different perceptions of an object into a single image and by merging form and color within the overall pictorial scheme.[54] And Robert Rosenblum proposes its discovery as revolutionary and important as the revelations of Einstein and Freud. He writes:

> For the traditional distinction between solid form and the space around it, Cubism substituted a radically new fusion of mass and void. In place of earlier perspective systems that determined the precise location of illusory depth, Cubism offered an unstable structure of dismembered planes in indeterminate spatial positions…no single interpretation of the fluctuating shapes, textures, spaces, and objects could be complete in itself.[55]

Glenn Watkins likewise suggests that painters encouraged analysis of their compositions through an emphasis of process of assemblage and simultaneously exposed perspectives.[56] This new art of visual contradictions can be seen in Pablo

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[53] Gris, as quoted in Kamber, *Max Jacob and the Poetics of Cubism*, 23.
[54] Lynn Gamwell, *Cubist Criticism* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research press, 1980), 102.
[55] Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1960), 9.
[56] Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1994), 230.

Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1906-1907), *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde* (1910), and *Man with Violin* (1912).[57]

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon

In *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (see Figure 2.1), Picasso staged such crucial issues as how to move beyond the traditional representation of the human body, and the spatial illusion of one-point perspective. The bodies of the five nude prostitutes are predominantly composed of geometric shapes and exaggerated anatomical proportions. Arcs and planes dissect the prostitutes, shattering the traditional notion of the female form; in the figures at the right, this fragmentation is carried to an extreme. Perspective is distorted by merging the nudes' bodies with the planes beside them, and by the deep shadows created by the noses of the women on the right side of the painting, which were influenced by African masks. Perspective is also shifted by Picasso's portrayal of anatomy. The square plane that constitutes the breast of the figure at left still adheres to her torso, whereas the square plane that forms the breast of the figure at the upper right becomes detached from the body, asserting its independent existence. With this figure alone, Picasso dismissed both one-point perspective and the classical tradition of the human body.

[57] My discussion of the cubist paintings that follow is influenced by analyses of Fry *Cubism*, Gamwell, *Cubist Criticism*, and Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art*.

Figure 2.1
Les Demoiselles d'Avignon
(New York: the Museum of Modern Art, 1906-1907)

Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde

In the *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde*, Picasso composed the entire surface of the painting as a series of intersecting planes, and abandoned the use of closed forms in favor of planes with long, straight edges that disregard the contours of objects. Now, more than ever before, the subject is linked to the flattened structural continuum of the surface of the painting – observe especially the fusion of Uhde's forehead with the surface of the painting. As a result, the subject is rather difficult to distinguish; however, clues are given (see Figure 2.2) which enable the viewer to recognize the subject, such as Uhde's heavy brows, and the cleft in his upper lip. In this portrait, all observable forms—body, head, table, and wall—are broken up into tilted geometric planes, connected to one another by means of dissolving line and form into a play between object and space, or solid and void. This play is underscored by the painters limited use of the palette: black, white, ochre and their mixture (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.2
Photograph of Wilhelm Uhde, taken February 1910

Figure 2.3
Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde
(Private Collection, 1910)

Man With Violin

Picasso's *Man with Violin* (see Figure 2.4) demonstrates the artist's move towards an increasingly enigmatic representation, and hence more subjective presentation, of the object. The degree of fragmentation has advanced from his *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde*, and at first glance, a reference to reality might be impossible to see. Yet, like in the *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde*, Picasso gives the viewer recognizable symbols, such as the strings and sound holes of a violin, as well as the violinist's ear, goatee, and buttons on his coat. Edward Fry, however, warns that in interpreting a cubist painting, "one must not try to establish an equivalent in the known visible world for each of its components; the painting presents a man and a violin, it does not represent them."[58] In a way, cubism freed itself from appearances only to uphold the "sense" behind such appearances. That is, as Kozloff suggests, "the picture could deny or even largely exclude observation of physical images, but images might be said to exist within that picture as reflections of a process of thought…capturing the immutable *idea* of an object." [59] John Berger likewise suggests that cubism reoriented the terms of the relationship between what the painter sees and what he paints:

> The Metaphorical model of Cubism is the *diagram*: the diagram being a visible, symbolic representation of invisible processes, forces, structures. A diagram need not eschew certain aspects of appearances: but these too will be treated symbolically as *signs*, not as imitations or re-creations.

[58] Edward F. Fry, *Cubism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 24.
[59] Kozloff, *Cubism/Futurism*, 8.

> The model of the *diagram* differs from that of the *mirror* in that it suggests a concern with what is not self-evident. It differs from the model of the *theater stage* in that it does not have to concentrate upon climaxes but can reveal the continuous. It differs from the model of the *personal account* [the romantic's attempt to make his own experience the equal of an act of nature] in that it aims at a general truth.[60]

In short, diagrams convey an idea of how something works, usually depicted through associated signs and conventions, such as the strings and sound holes of our musician's violin. Picasso's diagram of the musician, however, is much more complicated than, say, the diagram presented by a coach for his basketball team. We, the viewer, are likely to get lost in Picasso's diagram, which is precisely the critical problem associated with cubism. That is, the viewer must not look for a single definition of reality in cubist paintings, but multiple interpretations. And as a result, the viewer, like the artist, becomes a creator who reconstructs the painting in an infinite number of possibilities and meanings.

[60] Berger, as quoted in Kozloff, *Cubism/Futurism*, 6.

Figure 2.4
Man with Violin
(Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1912)

As a means of moving from the realm of painting into the realm of music, consider the following advertisement issued in 1919 by Chester Publishing Company for Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuels*:

> The music of Francis Poulenc may be likened in some way to the art of Picasso; there is no perspective, as it were, and no elaborate detail. But it must not be surmised from this that he is a 'cubist' or a 'futurist' composer; he is too refined an artist and too great an individuality to be dismissed with one of these vaguely comprehensive labels.[61]

The advertisement attempts to explain certain elements of Poulenc's music by drawing on common stylistic references with those found in cubist paintings (i.e. 'no perspective' and 'no elaborate detail'). The publisher attempts to link Poulenc with Picasso and the cubist movement in general, but cautions that there is much more to Poulenc than being a "trendy" composer. This places Poulenc within the milieu of the Parisian avant-garde, but also disallows for him to be "pigeon-holed" as simply a follower. By evoking Poulenc as a 'refined' composer within this cubist context, perhaps Chester intends that his music contains none of the savagery of musical primitivism (ala Stravinsky); his music, while mechanical instead of organic, is cultured music, polite avant-garde perhaps.

[61] Advertisement. *Chesterian* 2 (October 1919: 58-59).

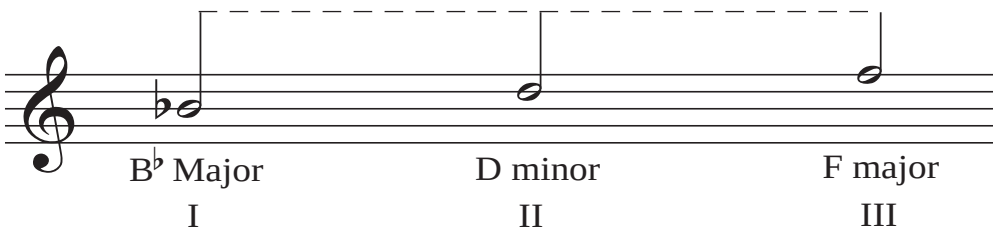
From the above survey it is evident that a cubist analytical approach in Poulenc's first stylistic period, a period highly indebted to the influence of Satie, is not only credible, but can be seen as contextual within the "new spirit" of artistic cross-fertilization in early twentieth-century Paris. And as previously discussed it also makes sense due to Poulenc's thieving magpie approach to composition. That is, throughout Poulenc's entire compositional career he shamelessly imitated the techniques and styles of other artists (composers and painters alike) whom he held in the highest regard. We need to now ask ourselves two questions: how can we bring such cubist principles over into the realm of music analysis? And how might we devise a mode of analysis sympathetic to the cubist aesthetic?

Listening for Cubes in Poulenc's *Mouvements Perpétuels*

Berger's notion of the diagram as a metaphorical model for cubism provides a good starting point for our cubic interpretation. The tonalities in all three movements of the *Mouvements Perpétuels* can be understood as a tonal trajectory of third-related tonalities. As seen in Example 2.5, a diagram of the tonal scheme of the *Mouvements Perpétuels*, the first movement presents B♭ major, while the second movement, D minor, and the third movement, F major, thus depicting a large-scale unfolding of a B♭ major triad. In this cubic musical context, the B♭ triad serves as the ground of tonal representation for the

Mouvements Perpétuels – here the tonality of B♭ is akin to the object(s) in a cubist painting, i.e. Wilhelm Uhde or the prostitutes in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Furthermore, Poulenc's B♭ major triad, and its conventional link with tonality, is a musical sign that will be subject to symbolic processes, forces, and structures.

Example 2.5
Diagram of the tonal scheme of the *Mouvements Perpétuels*



Our main concern is to investigate how the *idea* of B♭ is expressed in a cubic musical way rather than as a mere mirror-reflection of that tonality. In the classical style, for instance, when we encounter a piece that is in B♭ major, we ultimately see a mirror-reflection of that tonality since, for the most part, the piece will more than likely meet our tonal expectations. The work of Heinrich Schenker might be reread as illuminating a mirror-reflection of tonality, since the

background level always represents a tonic triad and subsequent levels unfold that triad according to the principles of counterpoint and tonal harmony. The mirror-reflection of our hypothetical classical piece in B♭ major can thus be seen as *representational*. While musical cubism has ties to such notions of representation, after all the first movement of the *Mouvements Perpétuels* appears, at first glance, to be in the key of B♭ major, its critical problem attempts to dissolve the very ties that bind it to tonal reality.

The alternation of modal forms for each subsequent movement (major-minor-major) establishes a tonal design that Poulenc exploits throughout all three movements. As seen in Example 2.6, this procedure is accounted for by retaining the third and fifth of each tonic chord, while subsequently shifting tonal centers up a third.

Example 2.6
Major/minor tonal process in the *Mouvements Perpétuels*

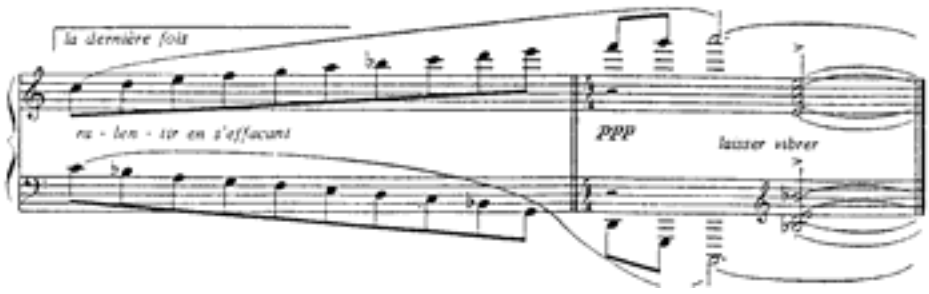
I = B♭ D F

II = D F A
III = F A C
[IV!] = A C E

The tonal scheme in Example 2.6 moves beyond the three tonalities already accounted for in the work by ending with a hypothetical fourth tonality, thus

extending the tonal process by another third-related tonality. The fourth, projected tonality would be A minor. This tonal procedure, as illustrated in Example 2.7, can help make sense of the final chord in the last movement of the *Mouvements Perpétuels*. That is, the right hand of the pianist plays an A minor triad, while the left hand plays a B♭ major triad, with omitted fifth (F), the very pitch that is common between the salient triads of Mvts. I, II and III (refer to Example 2.6). I will revisit the significance of this chord in my concluding remarks at the end of this chapter.

Example 2.7
Last chord of the *Mouvements Perpétuels*, III



The tonality of B♭ is thus a *sign* for the entire work, which enables us to take a close look at how this tonality is dissolved and fragmented in the first movement since it is the only movement in the work that actively negates the classical representation of B♭. Therefore, the majority of my comments on the

Mouvements Perpétuels will address the idea of a cubist tonal logic in the first movement.

The first cubist principle to be considered is textural fragmentation through the use of isolated musical patterns, which I envision as being analogous to the cubist painter's fragmentation of an object by geometric schemes and cubes. In Figure 2.8, four textures have been isolated in the score on the basis of difference in register, contour, and pitch organization. The first texture is marked from B♭ 2 to F2; the second texture, F3 to A3; the third texture, C4 to F4; and the fourth texture, F5 to F4. These isolated textures are the compositional building blocks of the entire movement. Being able to separate the linear patterns and understanding each independently is essential to the cubist musical aesthetic.

The first musical pattern, an oscillation from B♭ 2 (beats 1 and 3) to F2 (beats 2 and 4), establishes B♭ as the ground of tonal representation for the movement. The second pattern consists of a rising and falling scalar fragment, F3-G3-A3, and complements the first pattern both rhythmically, by following each pitch in the first pattern a half of a beat later, and on account of its pitch content. The second pattern fills in the tonal void created by the first pattern by providing the missing diatonic pitches (5-***6-7***-1) of the B♭ major scale. Together, these two patterns repeat themselves for 42 measures (all but the last measure in the movement), creating a fragmented tonal grid with which the remaining two textures will interact. For instance the third musical pattern in measures 1-2,

Figure 2.8
Mouvements Perpétuels, I

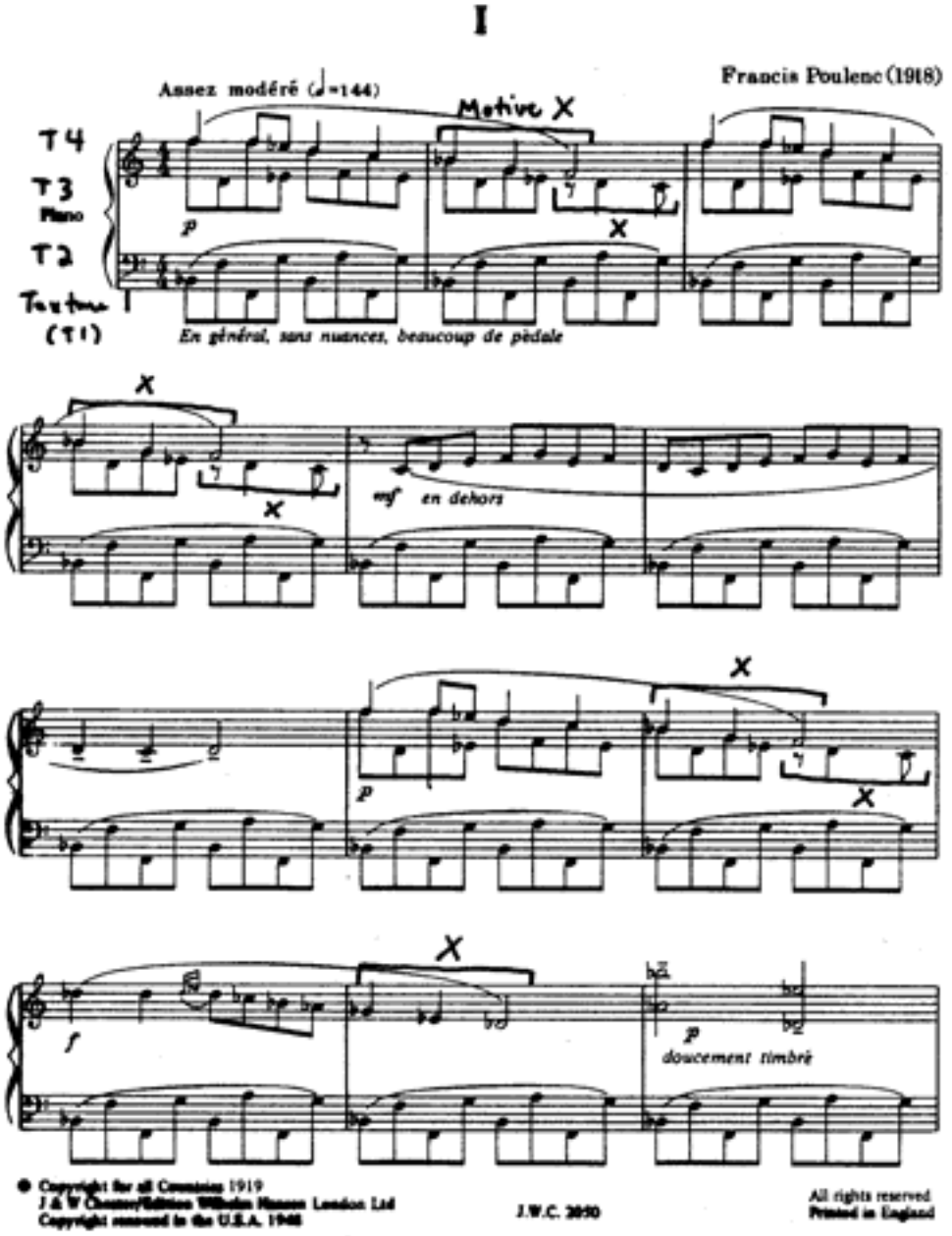
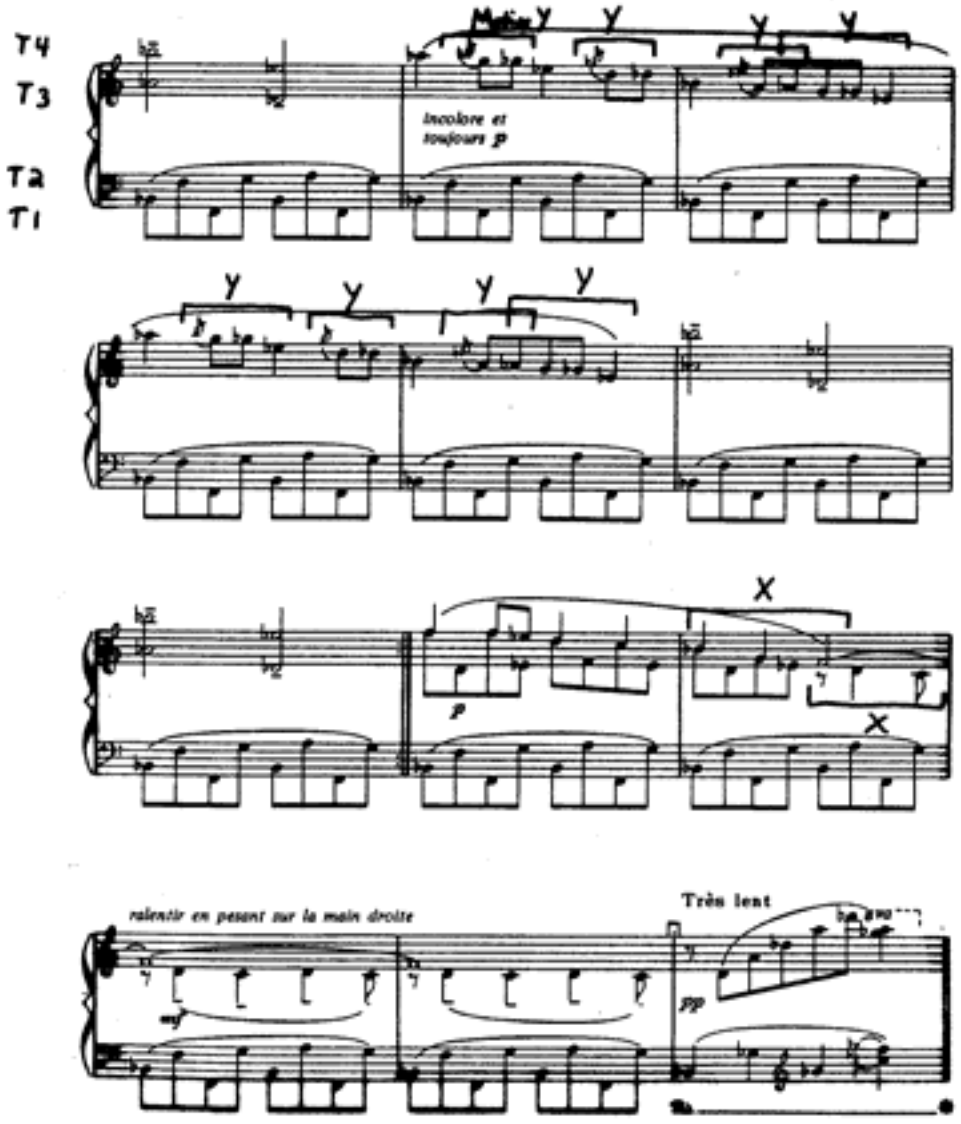


Figure 2.8, continued



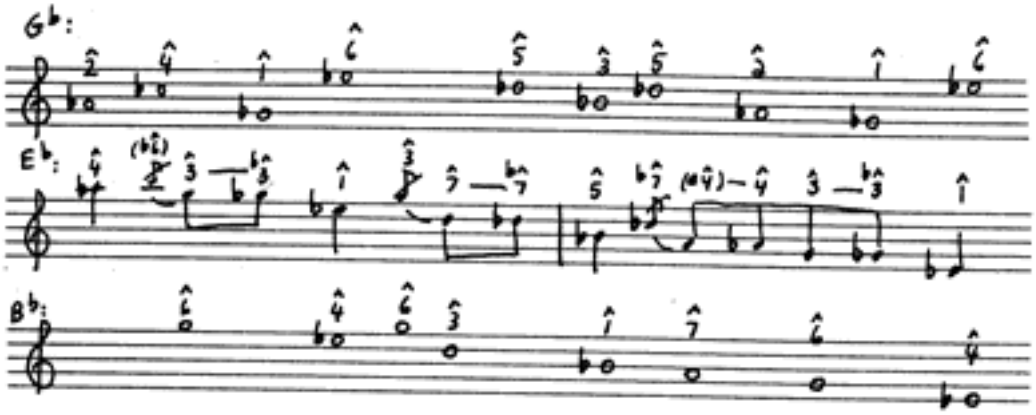
measures 8-9, and measures 21-23 completes the fragmented tonality of B♭ by providing the missing diatonic pitches in its scale: first pattern (B♭, F); second pattern (F, G, A); and third pattern (C, D, E♭). Combined, these three musical patterns provide all of the possible scale degrees in the B♭ major scale.

Poulenc also exploits shifts in tonal collections that are comparable to shifts in visual perspectives found in the cubist paintings previously discussed. In measures 1-4, measures 8-9, and measures 20-21, the fourth musical pattern descends through a B♭ major scale from F5 to F4, lending itself to a sort of Rondo effect in the movement. Significantly, each time this thematic material returns there is a clarification of the tonality of B♭. For instance, the first tonal blurring occurs in measures 5-7 with the five-finger-pattern in C major. During this bitonal section, where tonalities are juxtaposed one on top of the other, the left hand of the pianist continues its B♭ major trajectory, while the right hand shifts its tonal orientation away from B♭ up a step to C major. The opening material returns, however, in measure 8 reaffirming B♭ as the tonal ground. In addition, the emergence of G♭ major in measures 10-11 in the fourth texture triggers another disorienting bitonal shift – the tonality of G♭ signifies a half-step shift in perspective from the dominant of B♭, which, of course, would be F major. Without any warning, Poulenc repositions the tonal perspective, yet retains the *idea* of B♭ since the ostinato in the fourth texture mechanically continues throughout the G♭ major passage. The first musical pattern of B♭ to F in the

bitonal passage of B♭ /G♭ major has different tonal ramifications than the previous bitonal passage of B♭ /C major. In this new tonal context, the pitch B♭, which serves as scale degree 1 in B♭ major, could additionally serve as scale degree 3 in G♭ major, while the pitch F could serve dual roles as scale degree 5 in B♭ major and scale degree 7 in G♭ major. Moreover, in both tonal perspectives, the pitch B♭ is associated with a tonic-like function (as either scale degree 1 or 3) while the pitch F is associated with a dominant-like function (as either scale degree 5 or 7). Significantly, Poulenc never allows the pitch F to fulfill its natural voice-leading role and resolve upward to the tonic of G♭. Even though G♭ has temporarily dissolved the hegemony of the tonality of B♭ in this passage, the mechanical continuation of the scalar patterns in the first *and* second texture prevents G♭ from ultimately taking over. In fact, the second musical pattern continues its fragmented B♭ major trajectory (5-6-7) throughout measures 10-11 – this musical pattern, on the surface at least, has nothing to do with the tonality of G♭. If we look beneath the surface, however, the pitches F, G, and A could depict a shift in visual perspective, and in this case, a shift in tonal perspective. That is, together they symbolize a possible downward shift of scale degrees 1, 2, and 3 in G♭ major: namely, G♭ A♭ B♭ -----(down a half step)-----> F G A. In this passage the three musical patterns are reminiscent of isolated agents in the conjuring and musical planes of *Parade* since they seem to be stuck in alienated cycles.

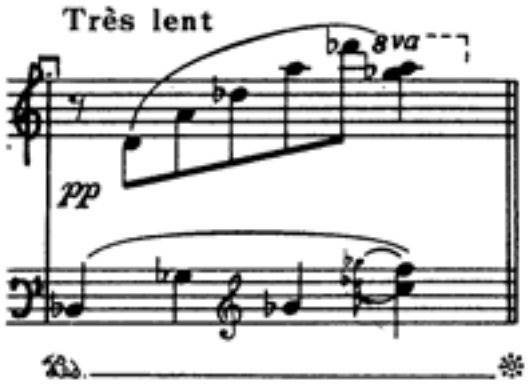
The superimposition of B♭ and G♭ major scalar fragments provides another cubist moment in measures 14-17 as both tonalities are fused into an elongated fourth musical texture, as Example 2.9 illustrates. With its initial interval of an augmented second (A♭ to B), the fourth texture evokes an oriental quality akin to Satie's *Gnossiennes*. The fusion also forges a new tonal object not yet encountered in the movement: namely, that of E♭ since the passage emphasizes the pitches A♭, E♭, and B♭ on the strong beats of 1 and 3 in both measures. Within the tonality of E♭ these three pitches can be understood as tonic, subdominant, and dominant, thus providing yet another occurrence of bitonality in the movement, now between B♭ and E♭. A comparison of the fused scalar patterns of B♭ and G♭ major can be drawn to the fusion of Wilhelm Uhde in Picasso's portrait; in both works, two separate objects are merged within the continuum of either the painting surface or the musical texture. And in the case of the *Mouvements Perpétuels*, the fusion forges an exotic, tonal presentation of E♭; but as was the case earlier in measures 10-11, the mechanical repetition of the first and second musical patterns assures that the hegemony of B♭ will not be undone.

Example 2.9
Fusion of B♭ and G♭ major tonalities, culminating in E♭, in the *Mouvements Perpétuels*, I



Another example that supports the notion of tonal fusion might be the last chord of the first movement, a chord that Keith Daniel refers to as "ambiguous." As seen in Example 2.10, the chord, along with its grace-note figuration, is a synthesis of a G♭ major chord with omitted third (G♭ 6, G♭ 5, D♭ 5) and a complete F major chord (F5, C5, A6). The aural effect of this chord is sheer half-step trickery; the left hand of the pianist slides down from G♭ /D♭ to F/C. The culmination of the first movement with the joining of these two chords, therefore, suggests a not-so-ambiguous harmonic function: V in both G♭ *and* B♭ major. Thus, while the last chord rings V in B♭ (albeit in second inversion), the addition of G♭ suggests a momentary resolution to that tonality – ambivalent, yes, ambiguous, no.

Example 2.10
Last chord of *Mouvements Perpétuels*, I



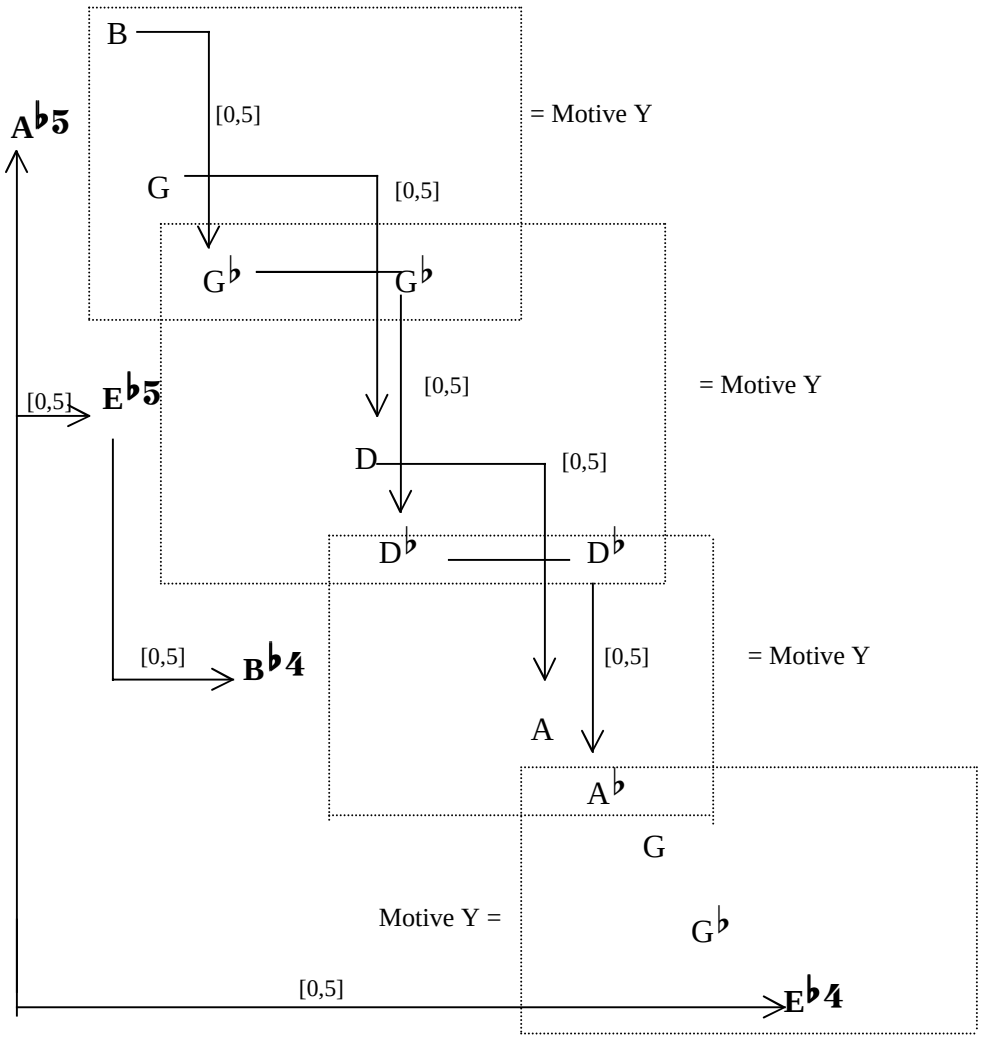
We can further unpack the correlation between the cubist painter's search for geometric logic with the intricate structural design of the movement, which I understand as stemming from the *idea* of the tonality of B♭. In measure 2, for instance, the fourth musical pattern creates what I have labeled in Figure 2.8 as Motive X by means of the following three pitches: B♭ 4 – G4 – F4. By keeping this intervallic relationship constant, Poulenc immediately expands the third musical pattern of D4-E♭ 4-F4 two semitones lower (D4 to C4) by eliding its highest pitch thus far in the movement with Motive X from the fourth texture. This elision breaks the mechanical stepwise motion previously established in the third texture. As a result in measure 2 and measure 4, F4 both ends Motive X in the fourth texture (B♭ 4-G4-F4) and begins it in the third texture (F4-D4-C4). The first occurrence of Motive X is associated with motion from tonic to dominant in

B♭ major; the second occurrence hints at a momentary tonal shift to F major with motion from its tonic to its dominant. However, the flippant five-finger pattern in measure 5 dissolves F major into C major, culminating the tonal sequence of falling fourths: B♭ major to F major to C major (or I to V to V/V).

The most intricate tonal pattern can be seen in measures 14-17, as Example 2.11 illustrates. The passage unfolds a series of falling fourths (or interval-5) from A♭ 5 to E♭ 5 to B♭ 4. At this point, in measure 15 and measure 17, the symmetrical unfolding is broken since the expected F4 (5 semitones below the previous B♭ 4) is not provided. Instead, the musical pattern culminates on E♭ 4, establishing a large-scale falling fourth relationship between the first and last pitches of the passage, assuming octave equivalency. If we consider the initial (and later large-scale) tonal relationship of A♭ to E♭ as more salient than the culminating tonal relationship of B♭ to E♭ in the passage, the tonality of A♭, and *not* the previously discussed tonality of E♭, would seem to have the upper hand. However, I feel that both readings are valid interpretations and represent different ways to experience the passage: namely, either as a manifestation of bitonality (B♭ /A♭ *or* B♭ /E♭) or even possibly a manifestation of polytonality (B♭ /A♭ /E♭). My analytical indecision highlights the cubist musical aesthetic of tonal ambivalence, allowing the listener to experience the passage in multiple, non-exclusive ways.

Another recurring tonal pattern in the passage is, what I have labeled in Figure 2.8, Motive Y, a motive which is clearly related to Motive X on account of

Example 2.11
Interval-5 pattern in the *Mouvements Perpétuels*, I, mm. 14-17

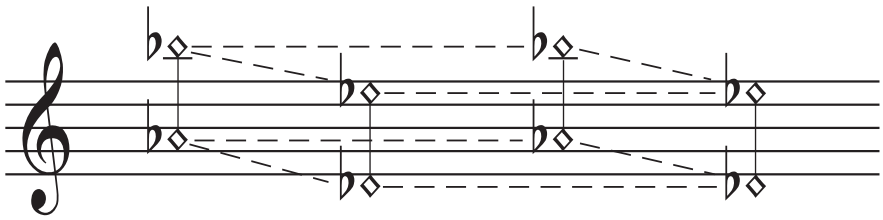


its common contour, number of pitches totaling three, and total number of semitones from highest to lowest pitch; the motivic interval-5. Motive Y, however, consists of 4 semitones between its first and second pitches and one semitone between its second and third (PC-Set [0, 1,5]). In the melodic descent from A♭ 5 to E♭ 4, Motive Y repeats itself four times: (1) B5 – G5 – G♭5 (2) G♭5 – D5 – D♭ 5 (3) D♭ 5 – A 4 – A♭ 4, and (4) A♭ 4 – G 4 – E♭ 4. Within the first three statements of Motive Y, the motivic interval-5 pattern mechanically spirals downward: (1) B5 – G♭5 – D♭ 5, (2) G5 – D5 – A4,(3) G♭5 – D♭ 5 – A♭4. This structural link is made possible because each new occurrence of Motive Y elides with its previous statement.

Another analogue to a cubist principle is found in the movement in the use of muted colors. Poulenc achieves this musical parallel through the avoidance of coloristic contrasts; nowhere in the movement is there a play between articulation types, such as legato/staccato or pedaled/unpedaled. The pianist is asked to play the movement *without nuances*, and to *use a lot of pedal* and, highly significant for my cubist interpretation, Poulenc even indicates for the pianist to play *colorless* in measure 14! For the majority of the movement the dynamic scheme is subdued – only measures 10-11 reach a level of *forte*. The dynamic increase in these measures underscores the ambivalence associated with the fracturing of B♭ and G♭ major into tonal planes.

The last cubist principle to be considered in the movement is "plastic remnants" found in the score itself. Like the cleft lip and heavy brows found in Picasso's *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde*, Poulenc provides an actual six-sided cubic anagram in the score. As illustrated in Example 2.12, in measures 12-13 and measures 18-19, a six-sided cube reveals visually – at least to the performer or analyst –that cubism is a guiding force. The vertical line in the six-sided cube connects simultaneities, horizontal lines reactive a tone, and diagonal lines represent a blurring of the third and fourth musical textures.

Example 2.12
Cubic anagram in the *Mouvements Perpétuels*, I



In sum, my cubist analysis of the first movement of the *Mouvements Perpétuels* focuses on cubist principles such as tonal representation/presentation, tonal fragmentation via musical patterns, tonal blurring via bitonality and polytonality, shifting visual/tonal perspectives, geometric/tonal logic, muted colors, and plastic remnants contained in the score itself. I would like to conclude

this chapter by reconsidering the tonal logic of the last chord of the *Mouvements Perpétuels*, a hybrid chord consisting of B♭ -major and A-minor triads. We can view this chord as embodying one of the framing tonalities of the work, the salient tonal ground of B♭ major; the musical *sign* of the work. Ending the work with this triad connotes the classical mirror-reflected idea of the closed work. With the addition of the A-minor triad, however, the classical representation of B♭ dissolves and the work remains open; it is the signature of an ambivalent ending. The triad of A minor, as we have previously seen in Example 2.7, moves beyond the frame of third-related tonalities stemming from the tonal ground of the B♭ -major triad. The *Mouvements Perpétuels* thus ends with an ambivalent nod towards *both* tonalities of B♭ and A, opening up the possibility for a rather subtle hermeneutic interpretation. On the one hand, Poulenc upholds the time-honored tradition of ending a work with the same tonality in which it began, representing the classical tonal object. But the last chord is no mirror-reflection. With the addition of the A-minor triad, the tonal ground of B♭ is forever fragmented, dissolving the representational tonal object into its cubic presentation, underscoring the ambivalence of the cubist tonal logic.

Chapter 3

> "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth."
>
> -- Oscar Wilde

Revealing Tonal Axes and Musical Masks in Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor, I

In the previous chapter we began our study of Poulenc's approach to tonality by considering tonal logic in the *Mouvements Perpétuels*. In the present chapter I will continue to unpack Poulenc's tonal procedures by investigating the first movement of his *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor (1932), a work that dates from his second stylistic period (1923-1935). My initial aim will be to further investigate Poulenc's "modulation games" with the hope of uncovering compositional procedures to account for his enigmatic tonal relations as well as his "wrong note" harmonies, a label that I've never been entirely comfortable within Poulenc scholarship. Both Keith Daniel and Wilfred Mellers have written about the Concerto,[62] but neither scholar moves beyond surface generalizations, such as identifying tonal areas in the movement as well as stylistic references. Both take note of the concerto's essentially tonal language and its clear tonal

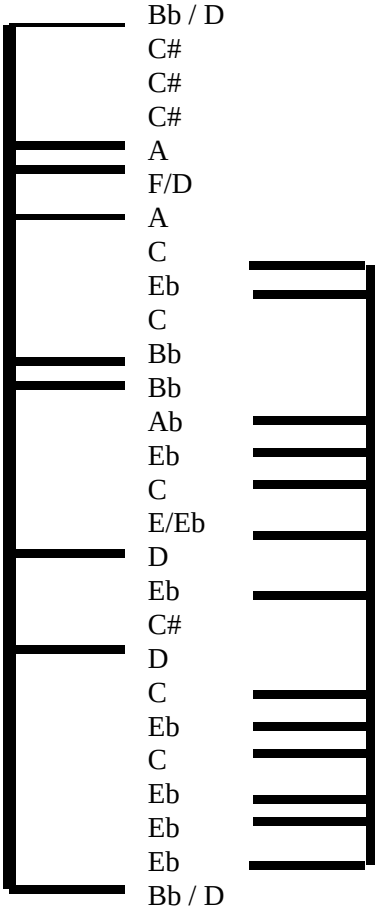
[62] See Keith Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* (UMI Research Press: Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982), and Wilfred Mellers, *Francis Poulenc* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

focus. However, they rightfully note that the movement is not in sonata form, as might be expected in the first movement of a concerto written in a neo-classical style. In fact, both scholars describe the form as ternary, based solely on tempo changes within the movement (fast-slow-fast). While both Daniel and Mellers certainly have contributed to the field of Poulenc scholarship, both of their analyses fall short in revealing any deep level of structure in the music.

A better understanding of the tonal organization of the first movement can be illustrated with Example 3.1, a chart that identifies the various themes and their tonal centers throughout the movement. A quick glance up and down the column to the right reveals that traditional tonal areas, such as the tonic (i), the mediant (III), and the dominant (V), are not the most prominent tonal areas in the movement. Instead, the movement is weighted equally towards the tonal areas of the submediant ($\flat$ VI), the subtonic ($\flat$ VII), and the neapolitan ($\flat$ II). The chart also reveals the Prologue and Epilogue as being associated with more than one tonal center (B$\flat$ and D). A similar pairing occurs in Theme 3 (C and E$\flat$). Hypothetically, each pair (B$\flat$ and D) and (C and E$\flat$) can be expanded to include other tonal areas from the chart, i.e., B$\flat$ / D / F / A and A$\flat$ / C /E$\flat$. In fact, third-related tonalities account for most of the tonal centers in Example 3.1, as the brackets illustrate.

Example 3.1
Tonal Centers in the *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor, I

Theme	**mm.**	**Tonal Center**
Prologue	1-18	Bb / D
1a	19-22	C#
1b	23-33	C#
1a’	34-37	C#
1b’	38-46	A
2	47-54	F/D
1a’’, b’’	55-61	A
3a	62-63	C
3b	64-65	Eb
3a	66-67	C
1b’’’	71-77	Bb
4	79-86	Bb
5	103-104	Ab
5’	107-108	Eb
5’’	109-110	C
5’’’	111-112	E/Eb
5’’’’	113-114	D
6	129-134	Eb
7	135-138	C#
Z	139-142	D
3a	143-144	C
3b’	145-146	Eb
3a	147	C
8	151-152	Eb
9	153-154	Eb
8	155-156	Eb
Epilogue	169-196	Bb / D



Joseph Straus has identified underlying tonal structures based on thirds in much of Stravinsky's neo-classical music; these third-related structures are akin to the hypothetical constructs derived from Example 3.1. Straus notes that a large part of Stravinsky's music is organized around tone centers, but is not tonal in the traditional sense.[63] That is, even though the foreground of Stravinsky's music contains remnants of functional relations of tonic, subdominant, and dominant, elements associated with common-practice tonality, these diatonic relationships *do not* determine the large-scale structure of the piece.

Straus sees much of Stravinsky's music as being organized according to the principle of tonal axes. He defines a tonal axis as a nucleus of pitches with three defining characteristics:

1. It must consist of overlapping major and minor triads (i.e., E/G/B/D, E♭ / G / B♭ / D, and so forth). In other words, it must have the appearance of a minor or a major seventh chord.
2. It must: (a) function in the piece as a referential sonority; (b) occur prominently as a discreet harmony in the piece, particularly in cadential situations (i.e., such that other harmonies derive from and relate to it).
3. It must embody a conflict or polarity between its two constituent triads. Each of the overlapping triads, which constitute the axis, must be shown to have an identity and centricity of its own.[64]

[63] Joseph Straus, "Stravinsky's Tonal Axis," *Journal of Music Theory* 26.2 (1982): 261-290.
[64] Straus, "Stravinsky's Tonal Axis," 265.

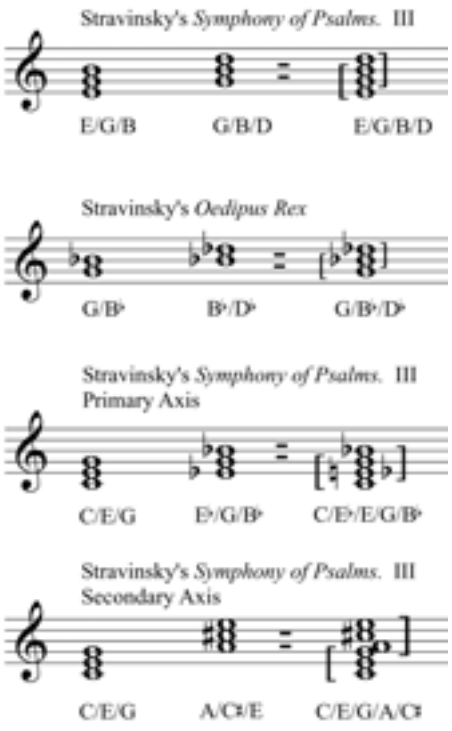
Example 3.2 illustrates several tonal axes from Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* and *Oedipus Rex*, as identified by Straus in each work. In each example, the tonal axis embodies a polarity (see #3 above), which is the principal determinant of structure. For example, in the first movement of *Symphony of Psalms*, the tonal axis consists of E/G/B/D; the polarity is between the E/G/B and G/B/D triads. Throughout most of the movement, the E/G/B part of the axis is emphasized; however, at the final cadence, G/B/D (with an emphasis on G) emerges as the new tonal center. Straus describes this tonal shift as "the tonal discourse of the movement. Motion takes place within the axis, but the axis itself remains unaltered as the fixed frame of reference for the entire movement."[65] The first movement of *Symphony of Psalms*, therefore, can be viewed as a move from E (E/G/B) to G (G/B/D) along the tonal axis of E/G/B/D for the entire movement.

Straus also finds it necessary to redefine the characteristics of the tonal axis to account for the tonal structure of certain works. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the tonal axis consists of overlapping dyads rather than triads (G / B♭ and B♭ / D♭), with the entire axis consisting of G / B♭ / D♭. Even though the axis is not based on overlapping triads, as in the first movement of *Symphony of Psalms*, the function of the two axes is the same: they both embody harmonic goals, referentiality, and polarity.

[65] Straus, "Stravinsky's Tonal Axis," 270.

In the third movement of *Symphony of Psalms*, Straus identifies both a primary and a secondary axis. The two triads C/E/G and E♭ / G / B♭ comprise the primary axis, while C/E/G and A / C♯ / E comprise the secondary axis. Straus notes that the presence of two axes in this movement results in two distinct levels of axial conflict. At the highest level, the two axes themselves compete for priority and determine large-scale structure. At a lower structural level, each axis (like all tonal axes) embodies polarity of competing entities, and in this case, triads.

Example 3.2
Tonal Axes in Stravinsky's Neo-Classical work



Tonal Axes in the *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor, I

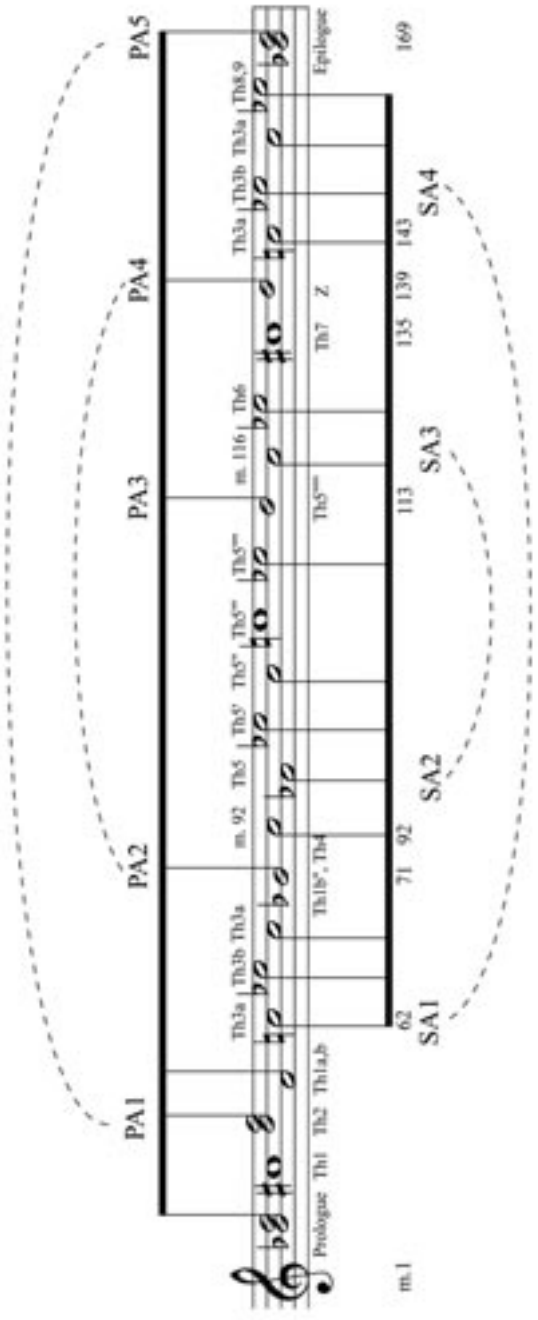
The first movement of Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos* is likewise organized around tonal axes. As shown by the brackets in Example 3.1, there is both a primary and a secondary axis at work: B♭ / D / F/ A and A♭ / C / E♭. The collection B♭ / D / F / A comprises the primary axis, embodying a conflict between B♭ / D / F and D/F/A. The collection A♭ / C / E♭ comprises the secondary axis. With respect to axial polarity, however, the secondary axis differs from the primary axis because its tonal conflict is not manifest in the foreground. That is, nowhere in the first movement is there a working out of a dyadic conflict between A♭ / C and C /E♭ as might be expected; rather, the tonal discourse is directed along the secondary axis only on a large-scale structural level.

The overall axial scheme of the first movement—the highest level of axial polarity—is shown in Example 3.3. The large-scale structure is achieved by a polarity between the two axes; it is this axial conflict which determines the tonal structure of the movement, a nine-part form resulting from the alternation of the primary and secondary axis. Since the movement ends with a statement of the primary axis, the polarity between the two axes is resolved in favor of the primary axis. These nine sections also form a palindrome on account of the distribution of both thematic material as well as axial subsets. For instance, between Primary Axes 1 and 5 (hereafter PA1 and PA5), the complete primary axis is represented

by all of its constituent tonal centers (B♭ / D / F / A), while both Secondary Axis 1 (or SA1) and SA4 share Theme 3 in its entirety. Between PA2 and PA4, once again the complete primary axis is represented, but now, only by virtue of the large-scale association of its two constituent triads: the tonal centers of B♭ and D. As we move towards the center of the symmetrical structure, the entire secondary axis of A♭ / C / E♭ is manifest between SA2 and SA3, and in measure 113, PA3 serves as the axis of symmetry for the movement, marked by the D-minor axial subset of the primary axis.

We can thus see that within the primary axis, the lower-level axial conflict between B♭ major and D minor is worked out through a large-scale process of axial reduction. Between PA1 and PA5, all four axial tonal centers are accounted for; with PA2 and PA4, however, the tonal centers of F and A no longer support the primary axis on the highest structural level. Rather, the two constituent triads of the primary axis are represented by the tonal centers of B♭ and D. These tonal centers are highly significant because they embody the triadic polarity inherent in the primary axis. And ultimately, PA3 culminates the process of axial reduction since now only one tonal center remains; the tonal center is none other than D. Moreover, the fact that B♭ is absent from the D-minor triad resolves the primary axial conflict between its two constituent triads in favor of D minor, the root of which of course serves as the prime tone center of the movement.

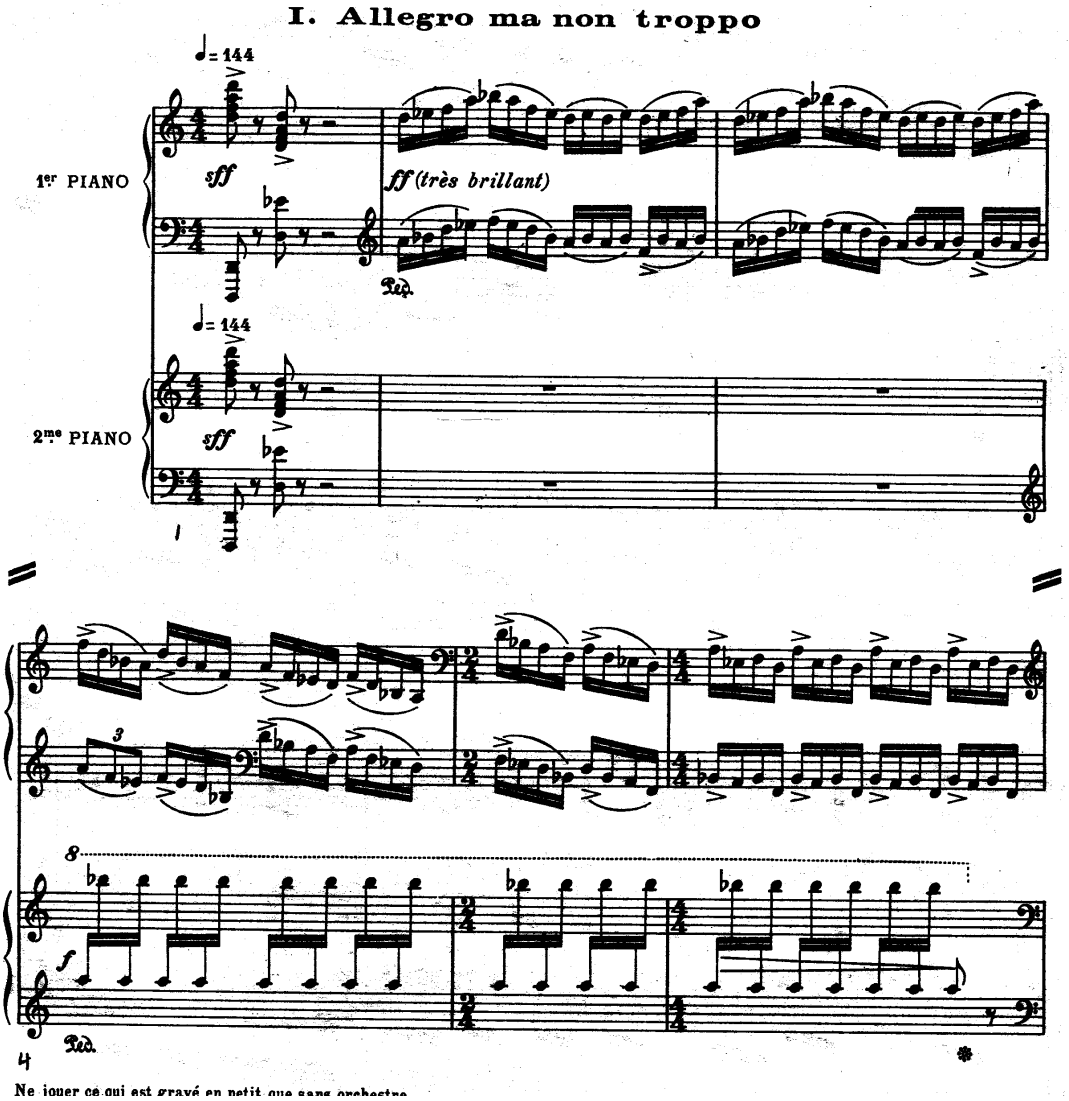
Example 3.3
Large-scale Structure in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



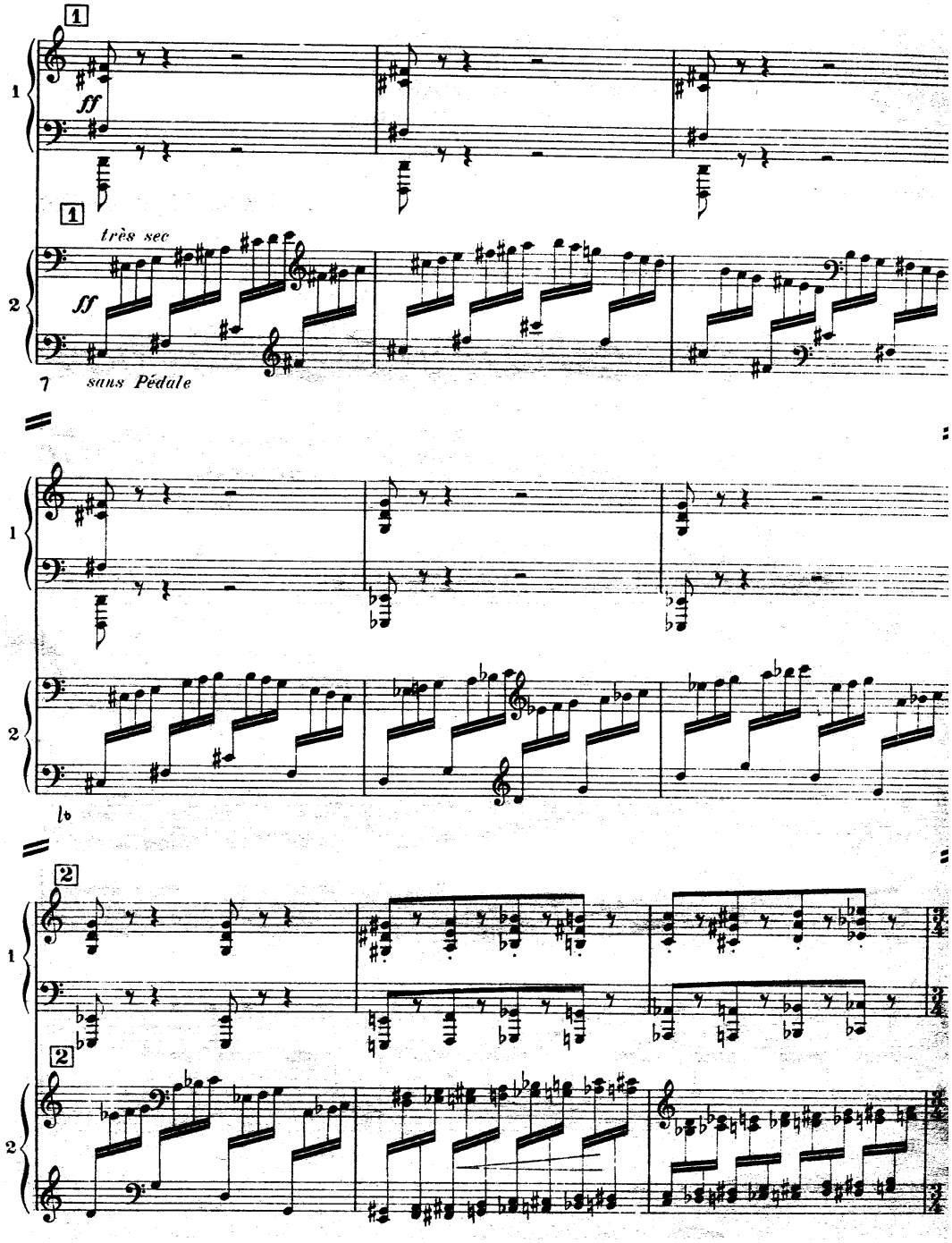
Having established the importance of both tonal axes in creating large-scale structure, we can now examine the foreground to evaluate how the axes are expressed as referential sonorities (#2 above). A short discussion of the Prologue (mm. 1-18), which will serve as a microcosmos of all possible axial sonorities, will illustrate how Poulenc generates both melodic and harmonic material from both tonal axes.

Example 3.4 shows that Poulenc begins the Concerto with two crashing chords, with both chords pointing to D as the tone center. The first chord is a pure D-minor triad; the second chord, also D-minor, adds E♭. With this second chord, a seed for development is planted as E♭ intrudes on the domain of the primary axis, foreshadowing the secondary axis of A♭ / C / ***E***♭. The D / E♭ clash in measure 1 itself is a foreground manifestation of this higher-level axial conflict; later, we will observe that other half-step relationships are also produced by the intersection of the two axes. The contrasting section that follows in measure 2 through measure 6 unfolds the complete primary axis as B♭ is added as a salient pitch. As a result, the axial polarity between B♭ / D / F and D/F/A results in the sixteenth-note passages of Piano 1, as D minor and B♭ major triads vie for supremacy.

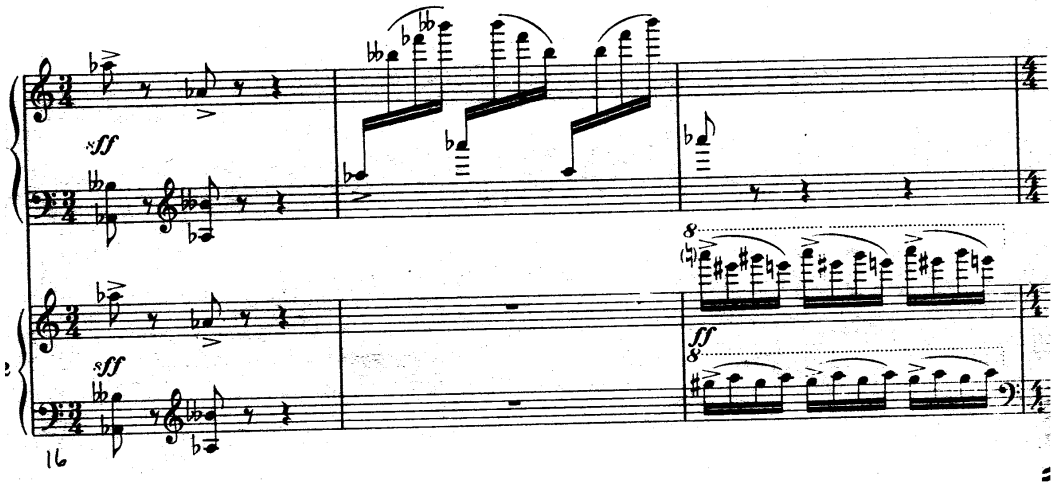
Example 3.4
Prologue (mm. 1-18), *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



Example 3.4, continued



Example 3.4, continued



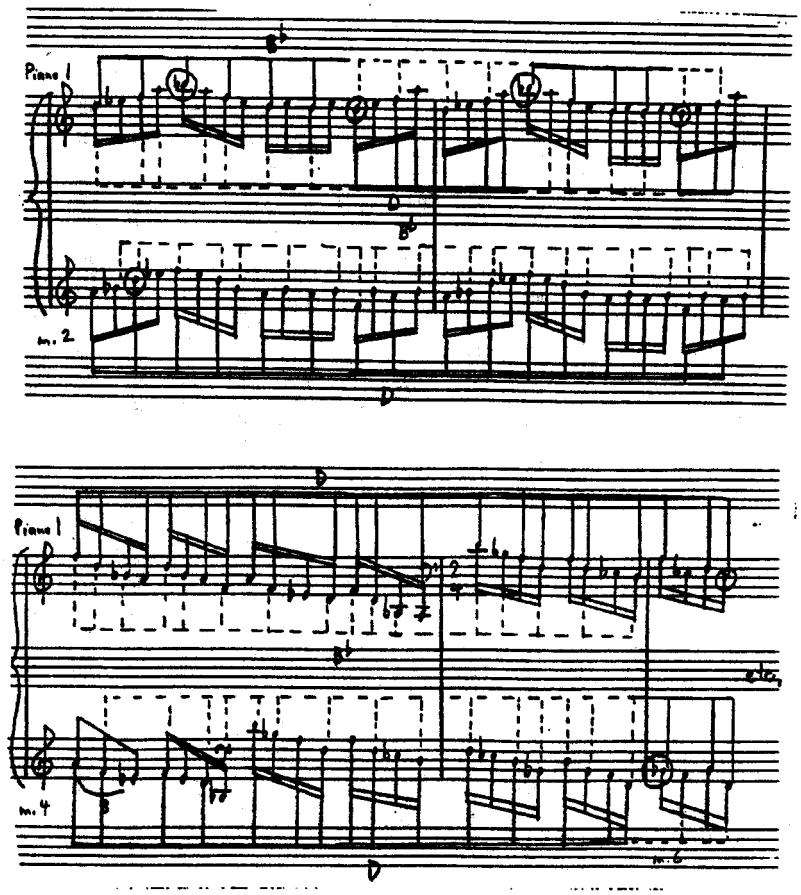
Example 3.5 provides an analysis of the B♭ major/D minor axial polarity in the Piano 1 part in measures 2-6. The solid beam indicates a strong tonal center (represented by an arpeggiated triad), while the broken beam represents a weaker secondary tonal center. Each of the beamed collections, whether solid or broken, projects either D or B♭ as the tonal center.

In measure 2, a horizontal parsing of the right hand identifies B♭ as the tonal center because of the upward arpeggiation (D-F-***B***♭) on the eighth-note subdivisions of beats 1-3. On beat 4, the same pitch collection from beat 1 is repeated, but now D sounds like the focal pitch because of the following context: the same four-note figure outlining the ***D***-F-A triad is repeated on beat 1 of measure 3. Due to this repetition, we hear a subtle tonal shift to D. Undercutting

the horizontal supremacy of B♭ in the right hand is D, suspended throughout the measure in a subordinate position (as indicated by the broken beam). In the left hand the situation is reversed; D is the more prominent tonal center, marked by A-***D***-F arpeggiations on each eighth-note subdivision throughout the measure, with B♭ now in a subordinate position. To summarize, an examination of both hands of Piano 1 in measure 2 reveals the following tonal centers: in the right hand, the primary area is B♭, secondary, D; in the left hand, the primary area is D, secondary B♭. If we combine both hands in measure 2 the vertical sonorities also demonstrate the tonal conflict between D and B♭. On beats 1, 3, and 4, D is more emphasized, but on beat 2, B♭ is clearly a challenger to be taken seriously.

The tonal conflict continues throughout measures 4-5, with horizontal arpeggiations of ***D***-F-A on the successive beats in both the left and right hands of Piano 1. Now, D is heard unambiguously as the tonal center in both hands, but as was the case with the left hand in measures 2-3, B♭ is suspended throughout the passage as a secondary tonal center, as demonstrated by the broken beam. The passage ends in measure 6 with a shift to B♭ as tonal center in the left hand of Piano 1; this shift occurs because of the placement of B♭ on each beat of the measure. Meanwhile the right hand of Piano 1 continues the influence of D as tonal center from measures 4-5, accentuating A of the D-minor triad. Piano 2 mirrors this conflict through its hypnotic repetition of A/B♭ , which can be viewed as a stripped-down version of the tonal ambivalence of Piano 1.

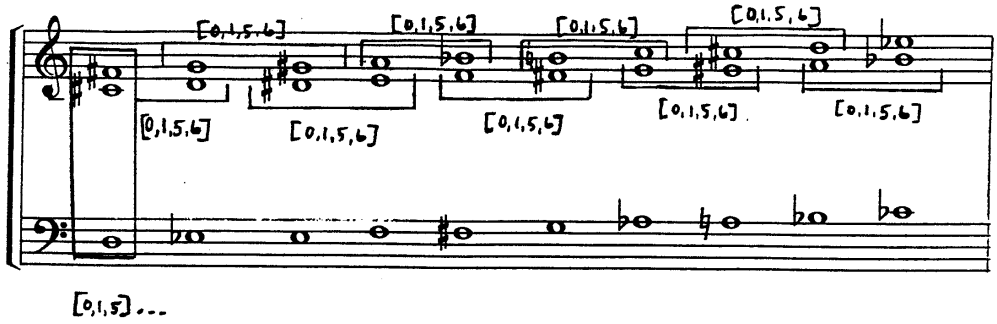
Example 3.5
Primary axial polarity, mm. 2-6, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



So far, I have focused on axial polarity within the primary axis; however, as suggested earlier in connection with measure 1, the Prologue also embodies a higher-level intersection between the two axes. We will now trace the intersection in greater detail. The D/E♭ dyad, which has been previously pointed out in measure1, can also be found in the right hand of Piano 1 in measures 2-3. The left hand of Piano 1 provides a corresponding emphasis on A/B♭, a dyad, as previously mentioned, within the primary axis. Together, these half-steps [A /B♭ / D /E♭] establish PC-Set [0,1,5,6]. Once Poulenc has established these axial sonorities in the foreground, they begin to take a life of their own; in effect, they act as motivic entities, and they even serve as a generator of harmonic progression. For example, in measures 7-15, the frenzied sixteenth-note passages of Piano 2 are accompanied by Stravinskian, block-like chords, which progress chromatically, resulting in a series of ascending [0,1,5]/[0,1,5,6] PC-Sets (see Example 3.6). Observe that the vertical sonority that begins the progression in measure 7 is PC-Set [0,1,5]. The missing G that is needed to complete PC-Set [0,1,5,6] is, in fact, provided in measure 11, resulting in a momentary resolution of the completed PC-Set; however, this resolution is not sustained. An interlocking chain of [0,1,5,6] PC-Sets climbs frantically through measure 15, climaxing in measure 16 with an A♭ /A dyad (the latter is notated in the score as a B♭♭. This A♭ / A dyad represents yet another intersection between the two axes, as was the case with D/E♭ in measure 1.

Example 3.6

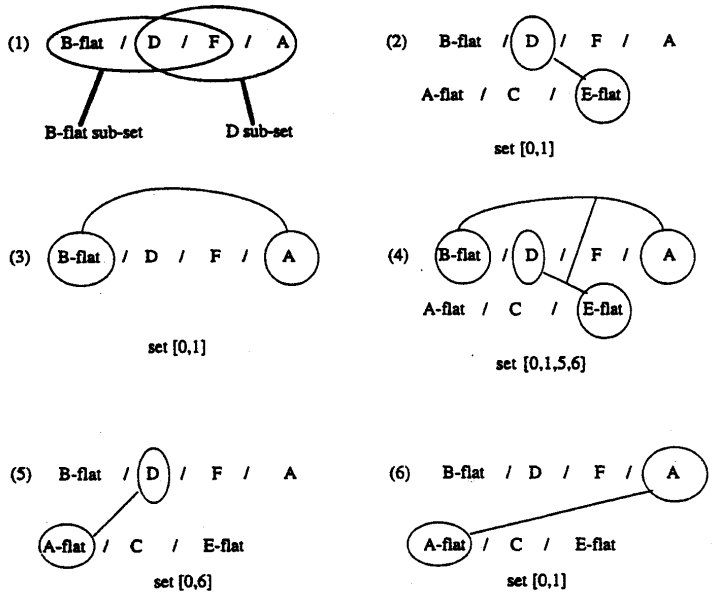
[0,1,5] / [0,1,5,6] PC-Set progression in mm. 7-15, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



The melodic framework of the Prologue is also bound to the tonal axes, as the opening D root of measure 1 and the A♭ melodic goal of measure 16 establish the dyad of the tritone; again, these two pitches are associated with opposing axes. Example 3.7 summarizes six axial relationships found in the Prologue: (1) B♭ / D / F / A, the entire primary axis, consisting of B♭ / D / F and D/F/A subsets; (2) D/E♭, tone centers from opposing axes; (3) A/B♭, tone centers within the primary axis; (4) A / B♭ / D / E♭, tone centers from opposing axes; (5) D/A♭, tone centers from opposing axes; (6) A♭ / A, tone centers from opposing axes.

From this brief discussion of the Prologue, it is evident that Poulenc uses both tonal axes and the intervallic relationships found between them as both

Example3.7
Axial Relationships in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



melodic and harmonic entities in the foreground. Example 3.8 provides a summary of the axial sets that occur throughout the first movement.

The remainder of this section I will limit my focus to only one axial relationship, D/E♭, and highlight its path throughout the movement. This axial dyad, which can be interpreted as a lower-level manifestation of the axial conflict between the primary and secondary axes, is pervasive throughout the foreground, both melodically and harmonically, and is one means by which Poulenc

Example 3.8
Axial Referential Sonorities in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I

Axial Sonority	measures	function
D/E♭		
	1	harmonic
	7-8	melodic
	64-65	melodic and harmonic
	92	melodic
	135	melodic
	137	melodic
	139	harmonic
	145	melodic and harmonic
	173	melodic
	175	melodic
	189-194	harmonic
	195-196	melodic
A/B♭		
	4-6	melodic and harmonic
	45-46	melodic
	57-58	melodic
	71-74	melodic
	153-160	melodic
	171-182	melodic
	189-194	melodic

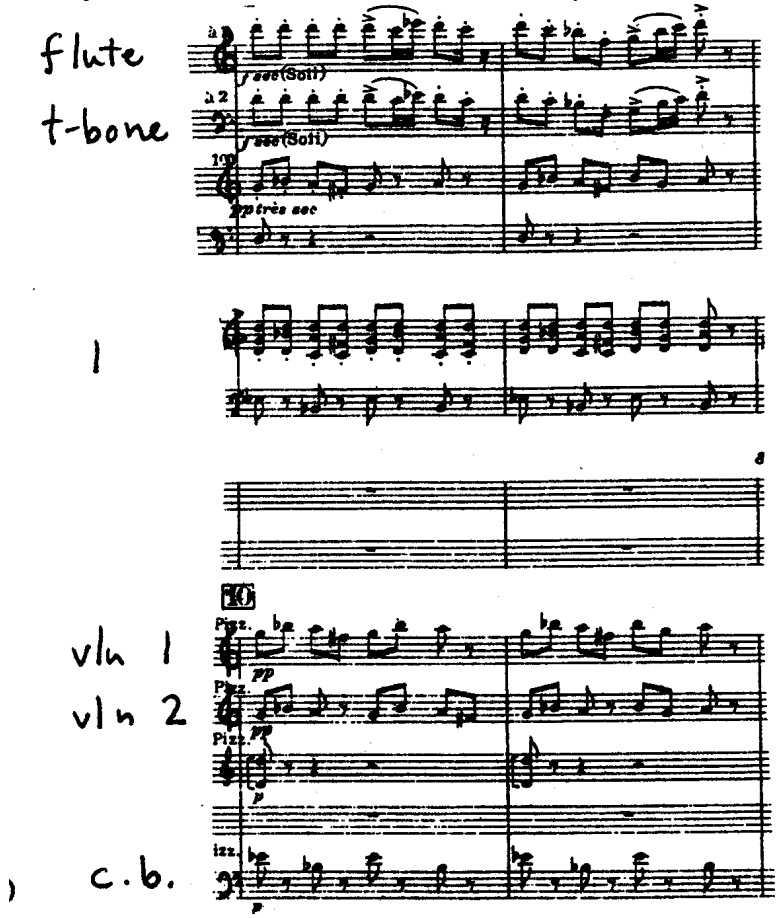
Example 3.8, continued

Axial Sonority	measure	function
A / B♭ / D / E♭		
	2-3	melodic
	7-16	[0,1,5,6] means of progression
	47-54	harmonic
	136	harmonic
	138	harmonic
D/A♭		
	1-16	melodic frame of Prologue
	78-86	melodic and harmonic
	89-95	melodic
	92-101	harmonic
	135-138	melodic
A♭ / A		
	16	melodic and harmonic
	59-60	melodic
B♭ / D / F / A		
	2-6	melodic
	161	harmonic
	169-194	melodic

organically generates the movement. As previously noted in my discussion of the Prologue, a foreshadowing of the secondary axis occurs with the second chord in measure 1 as E♭ invades the "home turf" of the primary axial subset [D/F/A], introducing a "seed for development" from which the Concerto will grow – specifically, the conflict between the primary and secondary axis. The next occurrence of the dyad takes place in measure 64 within Theme3b (Example 3.9).

Example 3.9

D/E♭ dyad, Theme 3b, mm. 64-65, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I

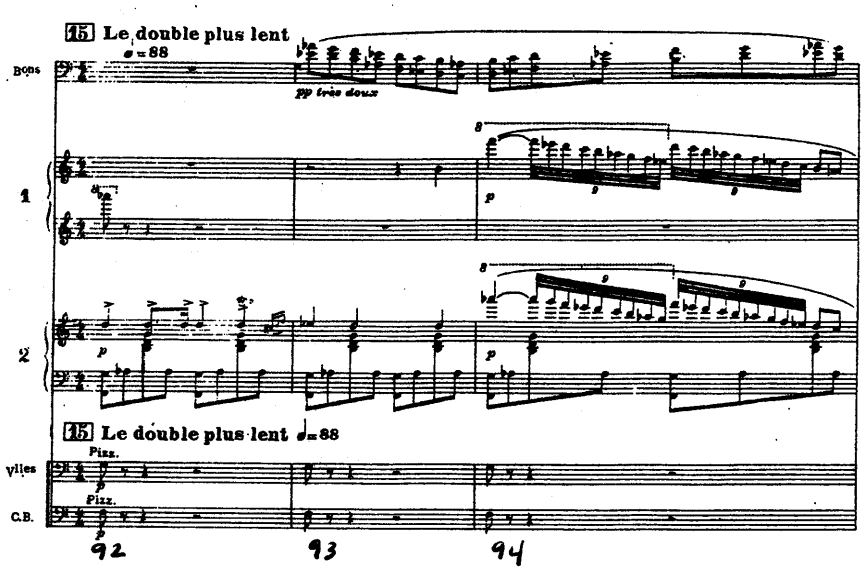


Here, the axial dyad of D/E♭ is used as an accompanimental gesture in the strings and Piano 1, and it is given emphasis as a melodic figure in the flute and trombone lines as well: observe that D/E♭ mark the highest pitches in the melody. Since E♭ is now the tone center for this section and is a member of the secondary axis, D now functions as the foreign invader, thus reversing the situation in measure1, where E♭ was dissonant within the context of the primary axis.

D/E♭ is also used as a melodic figure in measure 92 (see Example 3.10). The axial dyad is associated with a new rhythmic idea in Piano 2 that is pervasive throughout Theme 5: quarter-dotted eighth-sixteenth-quarter. The tone center in measure 92 is fuzzy on account of the ambiguous ostinato pattern in the left hand of Piano 2. Because of this vague tonal feeling, it is difficult to judge the relative tonal weights of D and E♭. Even though Piano 2 melodically emphasizes D over E♭, which might indicate the importance of the primary axis over the secondary axis, with the addition of the bassoon line in measure 93 (and in measure 94, Piano 1 and the right hand of Piano 2), the secondary axis is given structural importance because of the C-harmonic scalar passages. The ostinato of Piano 2 does, however, point to the secondary axis with the inclusion of an identifying harmonic marker, an inversion of the dominant of C in the left hand. However, this tonal relationship is tenuous since it does not really sound like a functioning dominant in this context; it merely hints of the secondary axis.

Example 3.10

D/E♭ dyad, mm. 92-93, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



In Example 3.3, I have previously shown that the secondary axis dominates the large-scale structure of the movement from measures 92-139, with only one shift to the primary axis in measures 113-14. In measure 139, however, the shift to the primary axis is affirmed by the thematic material. The harmonic support consists *only* of the D/E♭ dyad, reminiscent of the second chord in measure 1. Furthermore, this chord signals a new axial context since F and A have

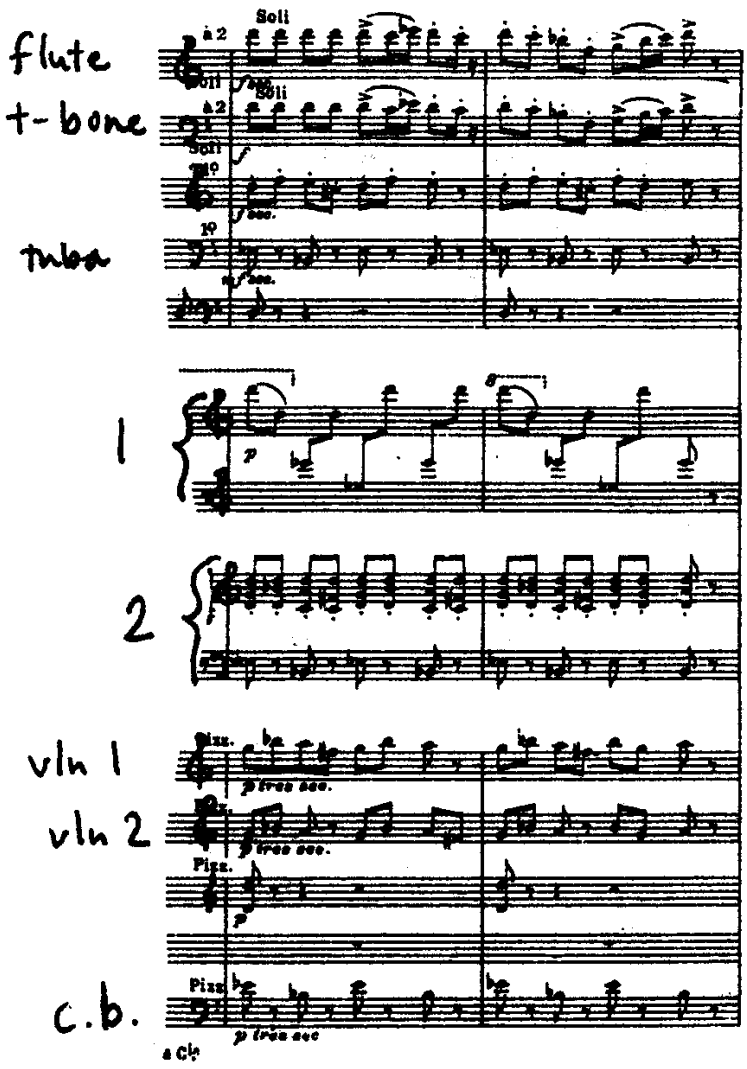
been stripped away, leaving only D pitted against E♭ of the secondary axis (see Example 3.13). This lower-level axial reduction highlights the prominent force that the secondary axis has gained in the movement. Further corroboration can be found in the registral doubling of E♭ in the chord (E♭ 3, E♭ 4, and E♭ 5). This doubling contrasts with the chord in m. 1, where E♭ 4 *alone* represented the secondary axis.

With the recapitulation of Theme 3 in measure143, both Theme 3a and 3b are repeated almost note for note, with one slight but highly significant modification: the treatment of the axial dyad D/E♭ is expanded (see Example 3.11). In measures 145-46, both pianists isolate the axial dyad (right hand, D, left hand, E♭), illustrating the intensifying volatile conflict between the axes as well as the organic growth of the D/E♭ dyad.

The movement ends with a return to the primary axis in the epilogue (see Example 3.12). The axial dyad of D/E♭ saturates the last twelve measures of the movement both melodically and harmonically. In measure 185, Piano 1 and Violin 1 begin their tune with D/E♭, and in measure 189, the dyadic chord in the strings is reminiscent of measure1 and measure 139 (see Example 3.13). Now, however, E♭ 3 of the secondary axis has been stripped away, suggesting that D (and its associated primary axis) may be reasserting its tonal control.

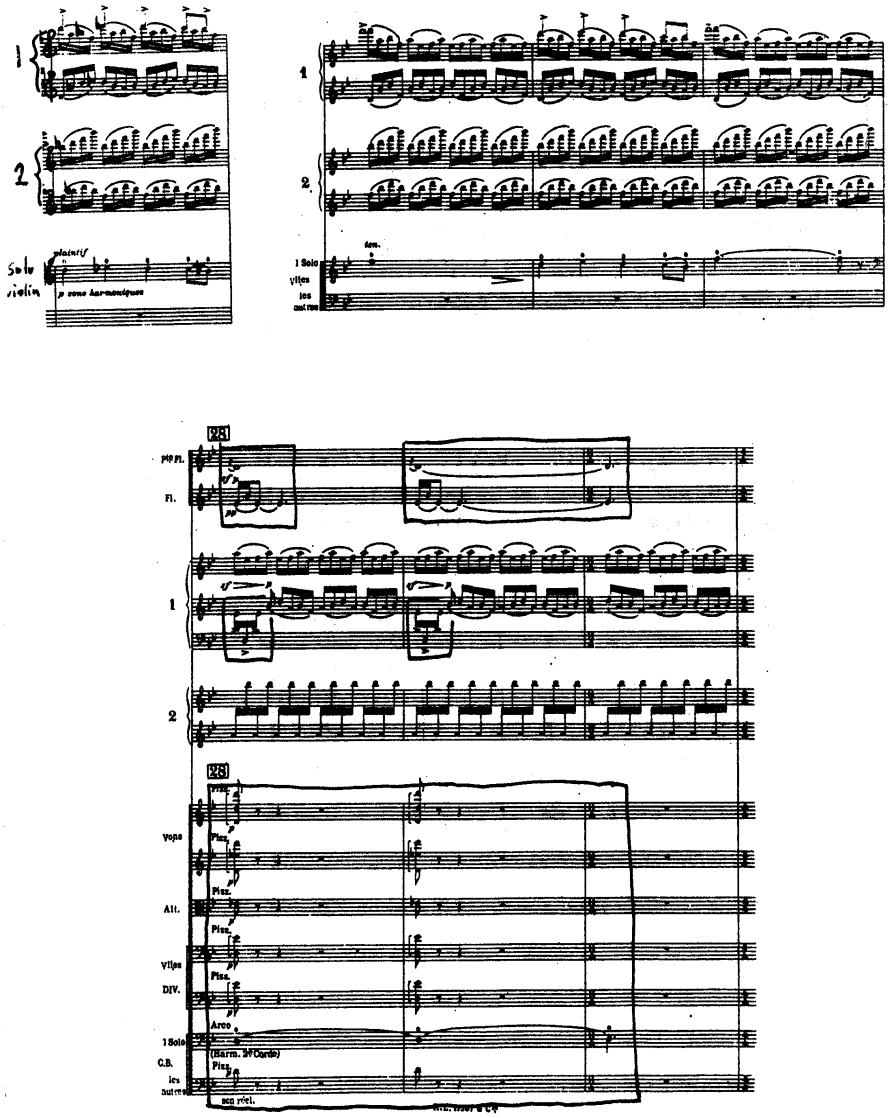
Example 3.11

D/E♭ dyad, Theme 3b, Piano 1 and 2, mm. 145-46, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I

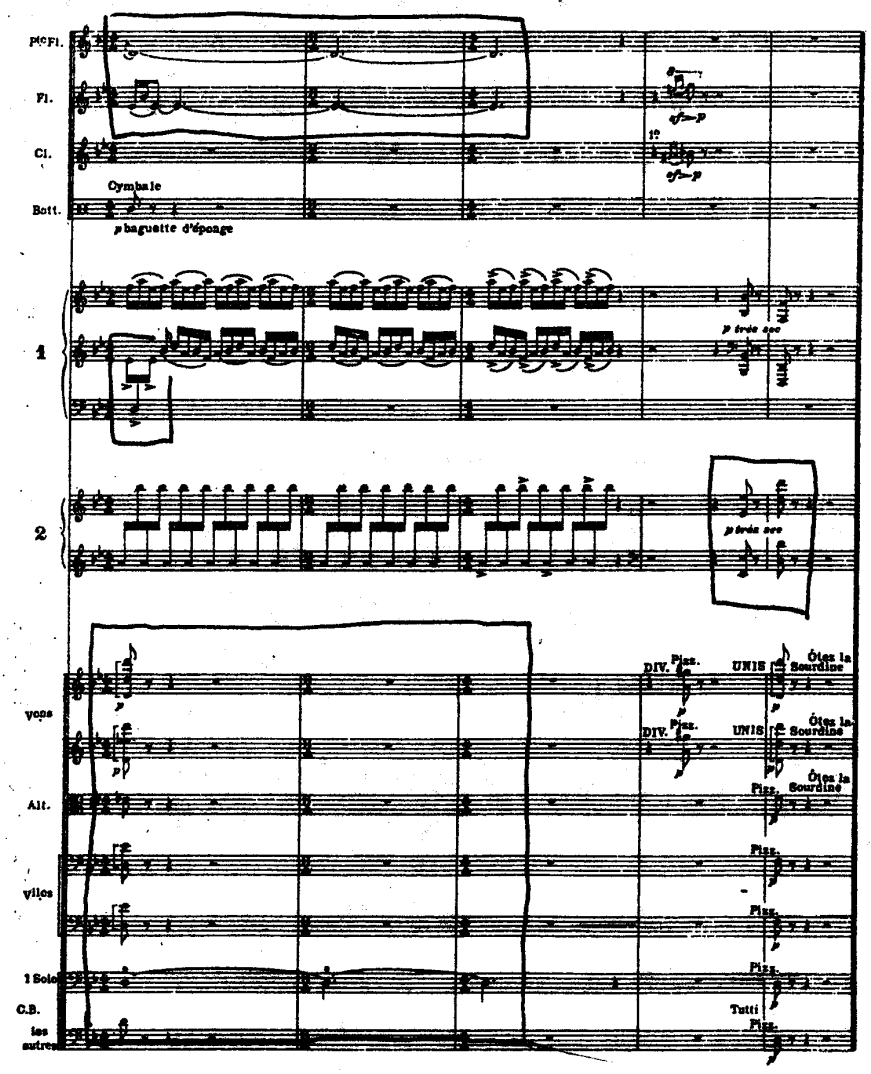


Example 3.12

D/E♭ dyad, Epilogue, mm. 185-196, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I

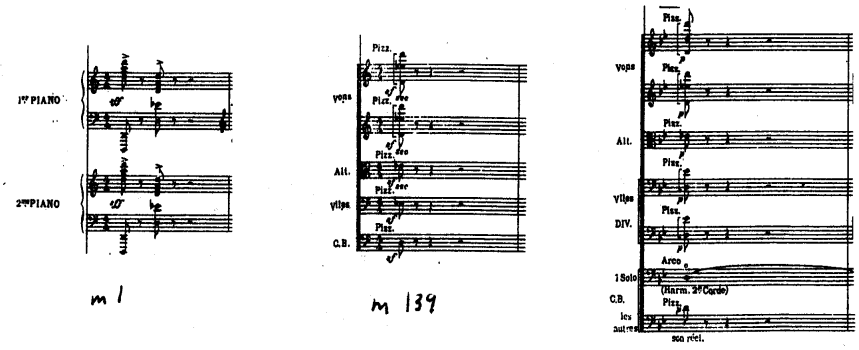


Example 3.12, continued



Example 3.13

Three manifestations of D/E♭ clash in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



Measure 1:	D/F/A primary axial subset; Eb4 “foreign element”
Measure 139:	D/Eb axial sonority; Axial reduction (F/A absent); Eb3, Eb4, and Eb5 “foreign element
Measure 189:	D/Eb axial sonority; Axial reduction (F/A absent); Eb4 and Eb5 “foreign element”

Corroboration for this interpretation is found in the flute and Piano 1 lines in measures 189-94, since E♭ sounds dissonant against the more salient primary axis. Poulenc ends the movement with a melodic gesture of E♭ to D. These two pitches, which have been shown as a pervasive dyad throughout the movement, symbolize the resolution of the axial conflict (both on the higher- and lower-levels) in the movement: the secondary axis, only in the last measure, yields to the primary axis.

Thus, the first movement of the *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor demonstrates how Poulenc, like Stravinsky, structures a neo-classical work by means of tonal axes. The analysis presented here illustrates that on the highest level, the form is generated by a tonal conflict between the primary and secondary axis, and on the lowest structural level, the music evolves from intervallic relationships found within and between the axes, leading to processes of musical growth in the movement. I have suggested that Poulenc may have been influenced by some of Stravinsky's neo-classical works by means of underlying structures based on thirds, or by what Joseph Straus has labeled tonal axes. In the 1940s, a decade after which the Concerto was written, Poulenc spoke of Stravinsky's influence on his style:

> Around the age of twenty, I was wild about Stravinsky's music. Many of my earliest works serve witness to this passionate veneration; it was a natural influence since, at that time, I would often play the overture to *Mavra* or the finale of *Pulcinella* more than twenty times on a given day. Now that I am past forty, and I am controlling, or should be controlling,

> my sentiments, I have maintained my fervor for Stravinsky's music, and I continue to owe many of my most joyful musical experiences to this master.[66]

Poulenc's debt to Stravinsky is also expressed in this statement, made late in his life:

> Ah, yes, if Stravinsky had not existed, would I have written music? All I can tell you is that I consider myself a son that he would certainly disown, but nevertheless a spiritual son of Stravinsky.[67]

By focusing our attention on tonal axes, we may find that many more of Poulenc's works will have further tonal secrets to reveal. We may also gain a better understanding of the relationship between the music of Poulenc and the music of Stravinsky, a relationship that no doubt stems from Poulenc's devotion to the composer.

Kramer's Windows, Agawu's Musical Topics, and the Art of Interpretation

In the preceding section I have demonstrated a structural framework for the first movement of the *Concerto for Two Pianos* consisting of tonal axes. Having established this structural framework I would now like to approach the first movement from an interpretive or hermeneutic position. My approach will be modeled, in part, on Lawrence Kramer's work in his *Music as Cultural*

[66] Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style*, 96.
[67] Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style*, 25.

Practice, 1800-1900, where he defines three possible hermeneutic windows through which an analyst or critic can develop an interpretation:

1. Textual inclusions. This type includes texts set to music, titles, epigrams, programs, notes to the score, and sometimes even expression markings.
2. Citational inclusions. This type includes titles that link a work of music with a literary work, visual image, place, or historical moment; musical allusions to other compositions; allusions to the styles of other composers or of earlier periods; and the inclusion of other characteristic styles not predominant in the work at hand.
3. Structural trope. This type includes a structural procedure, capable of various practical realizations, that also functions as a typical expressive act within a certain cultural/historical framework.[68]

By adapting Kramer's hermeneutic windows for my reading I will develop an interpretation for the first movement that addresses Poulenc's highly eclectic musical style. My interpretive approach will continue along the same analytical path begun in the first part of this chapter. That is, I will attempt to draw connections between Poulenc's working out of tonality with his ambivalence toward high and low cultural styles in general, and his changing view towards romanticism in particular.

My hermeneutic approach also makes extensive use of musical style topics. Kofi Agawu has worked out a theory of style topics based on semiotics.[69] Musical topics consist of two parts: a signifier and a signified (see Table 3.14)

[68] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 9-10.

Table 3.14
Musical Topics in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I

Signifier	**Signified**	**Culture**	**Theme**	**Mm**
Symphony of Psalms, I quotation	Stravinsky	High	Prologue	1-6
Rite of Spring-ish: violent harmonic and rhythmic idiom	Stravinsky	High	Prologue	7-18
Simplification of melodic line, reduced texture, functional harmony, mechanical rhythmic style	Neoclassical	High	1a, 1b, 1a' 1b'	19-46
Playful melodic gesture, clarinet and flute, Oom-pah accompaniment	Circus	Low	2	47-50
Circus melody, violent harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment	Circus and Stravinsky	Low/High	2'	51-54
Simplification of melodic line, reduced texture, functional harmony, mechanical rhythmic style	Neoclassical	High	1a'', 1b''	55-61
Simple melody, I-V accompaniment	Dance Hall	Low	3a, 3b	62-67
Violent harmonic and rhythmic idiom, static harmonies	Neoclassical (Stravinsky)	High	1b'''	71-91
Ostinatos, planing, vague sense of tonal center	Impressionistic	High	"5"	92-94

[69] Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

Table 3.14, continued

Signifier	**Signified**	**Culture**	**Theme**	**Mm**
Lyrical, highly chromatic highly modulatory, dramatic use of dynamic contrast	Romantic	High	5	103-115
Ostinatos, planing, vague sense of tonal center	Impressionistic	High	“5”	116-125
Brisk walking tempo, tuneful melody with light accompaniment	Parisian	Low	6	125-126
Dramatic use of dynamic contrast, shift in mode, chromaticism	Romantic	High	7	135-138
Simple melody, I-V accompaniment	Dance Hall	Low	3a, 3b	143-147
Horns	Town Band	Low	9a, 9b	151-152
Simple melody, neoclassical harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment	Dance Hall	Low	8	153-154
Horns	Town Band	Low	8	155-156
Simple melody, neoclassical harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment	Dance Hall	Low	9a’, 9b’	157-160
Hypnotic, “pentatonic”	Gamelan	High	Epilogue	169-196

The signifier is a relational unit within the parameters of melody, harmony, instrumentation, and rhythm, while the signified is its association outside the work. The diverse musical topics shown in the second column are categorized according to two general types as indicated in the third column under the heading culture: *high*, which consists of art musical styles, such as Stravinsky, neo-classical, romantic, and impressionistic topics, and *low*, which are musical styles of the everyday, such as the dance hall and circus topics.

Jean Cocteau discusses both cultural styles in his artistic manifesto, *The Cock and the Harlequin*, which was first published in 1918. Through a consideration of this influential manifesto, we can better understand the artistic context in which Poulenc composed the Concerto. And subsequently, we will uncover Cocteau's lofty ideas on art that ultimately stem from the aesthetic of Satie's *Parade*, which had a significant impact on the young and impressionable Poulenc. In fact, a drawing by Cocteau shown in Figure 3.15 suggests the central role he occupied with the members of "Les Six." In his sketch, the group can be seen as a single entity with Cocteau envisioning *himself* as the center from which artistic ideologies for the group are derived. This interpretation, which is supported by critics such as Frederick Brown, stems from Cocteau placing himself as the focal point in the sketch.[70] While this drawing suggests that Cocteau may have suffered from an inflated ego, after all, the group was more

[70] See Frederick Brown, *An Impersonation of Angels: A Biography of Jean Cocteau* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968).

united by friendship rather than aesthetic similarities, Cocteau's influence was nonetheless apparent throughout the Parisian artistic communities in the 1920s and 1930s.[71] And of all the members of "Les Six," Poulenc would adhere closest to the principles enumerated in *The Cock and the Harlequin*.

Figure 3.15
"Les Six" drawing by Cocteau

AURIC, DUREY, HONEGGER, MILHAUD, POULENC, TAILLEFERRE

[71] In addition to Brown, *An Impersonation of Angels*, see Margaret Crosland, *Jean Cocteau* (London: Peter Nevill, Ltd., 1955).

In the manifesto Cocteau asserts modernist principles by praising the simplicity of the new, French music, while warning of the evils of high culture, as the dedication in the manifesto (to Georges Auric) illustrates:

> I offer … [artistic principles] to you because a musician of your age proclaims the richness and grace of a generation which no longer grimaces or wears a mask, or hides, or shirks, and is not afraid to admire or to stand up for what it admires. It hates paradox and eclecticism. It despises their smile and faded elegance. It also shuns the colossal. That is what I call escaping from Germany.[72]

We may interpret the phrase "escaping from Germany" as a rhetorical trope representing an escape from high culture, especially Germanic music of the late 19th century. When discussing romantic music in *The Cock and the Harlequin*, Cocteau writes: "Wagner's works are long works, which are long and long-drawn out, because this old sorcerer looked upon boredom as a useful drug for the stupefaction of the faithful." [73] Later in the same passage, Cocteau even warns that this type of music should be listened to with one's hands clasped over the ears, as if to protect oneself from being penetrated by it.

Cocteau thus distinguishes between "good" and "bad" music in the manifesto – here, good and bad are analogous to my aforementioned binary categories of low and high cultural styles. As one might expect, Cocteau

[72] Margaret Crosland, *Cocteau's World: An Anthology of Writings by Jean Cocteau* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1972), 303.
[73] Cocteau, as quoted in Crosland, *Cocteau's World*, 308.

considers any highbrow or academic composer as being "bad." The following diatribe against Stravinsky's Russian Period music will serve as one example, among countless many, against Cocteau's so-called "bad" music:

> How can we defend ourselves? We set our teeth. We feel cramps like those of a tree which grows in jerks with all its branches. There is even in the very speed of this sublime growth something theatrical. I do not know if I make myself clear; Wagner cooks us slowly; Stravinsky does not give us time to say "Ouch!"; but both of them upset our nerves. This is music which comes from the bowels; an octopus from which you must flee or else it will devour you.[74]

In opposition to the music of such "artist" composers as Wagner and Stravinsky, Cocteau valorizes low cultural styles of the everyday, which includes the familiar Parisian sounds of the circus, dance halls, and jazz. These musical styles are connected with the popular Parisian culture of the early twentieth century and represent for Cocteau a modern aesthetic that all artists should use as inspiration in their art.[75] Poulenc would draw inspiration from popular musical styles throughout his life, but, much to the chagrin of Cocteau, he would look to high culture for sources of inspiration as well.[76] Poulenc can thus be considered a highly eclectic composer; he freely mixes musical styles, *incongruous* musical

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[74] Crosland, *Cocteau's World*, 319.
[75] For a discussion of popular musical styles in early 20th-century Paris, see Nancy Perloff's *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[76] For a discussion of Poulenc's use of popular music, see Perloff, *Art and the Everyday*, especially Chpt. 4 ("The popular world of Cocteau, Milhaud, Poulenc, and Auric") and Chpt. 6 ("Embracing a popular language").

styles, to suit his needs and fancy. In this respect, his music can be considered at odds with Cocteau's aesthetics in *The Cock and the Harlequin* since paradox is an essential component of the man as well as his music. To elaborate on Poulenc's stylistic eclectisism, let us consider his use of style topics in the Concerto.

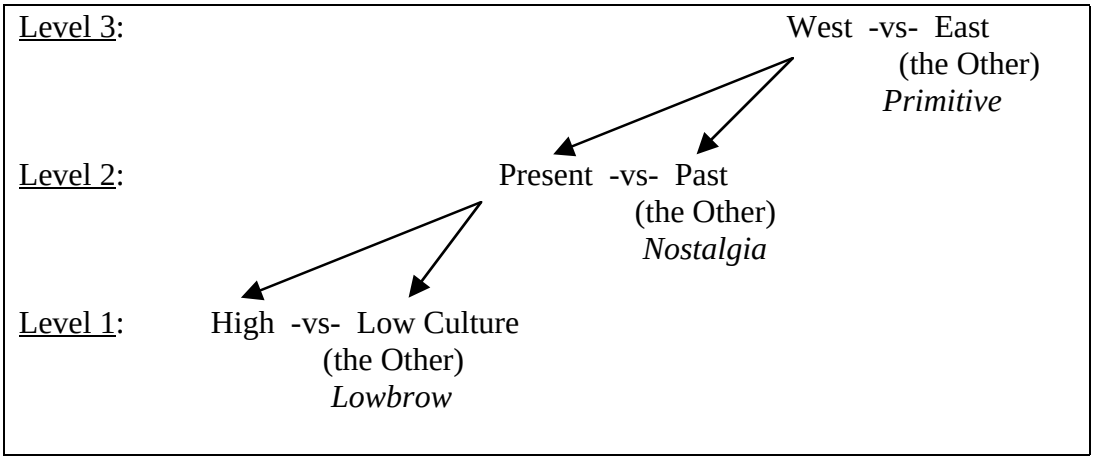
On account of its frenetic, schizophrenic quality, I like to imagine the first movement of the *Concerto for Two Pianos* as a frenzied masked ball, where Poulenc wears different masks of various composers and musical styles. No doubt Poulenc adopts various masks because of his thieving magpie compositional approach. Ned Rorem even goes so far as to suggest that Poulenc never penned an original note since every measure can be traced back to another composer. On the surface, therefore, Poulenc is objectively removed from his music, hidden behind masks of once directly expressed emotion.

In addition, by wearing different masks Poulenc is able to contemplate a world to which he is attached. For instance, all of the musical topics in the first movement (hereafter I will refer to these as musical masks) can be grouped according to common stylistic, temporal, or geographical characteristics, resulting in a hierarchy of binary oppositions shown in Table 3.16. At the lowest level, Level 1, high and low cultural styles are shown as binary oppositions. Level 2 shows a binary split between the present and the past: the present musical styles consist of all styles from Level 1, while the styles of the past consist solely of the romantic and impressionistic masks. At the highest level, Level 3, exists the

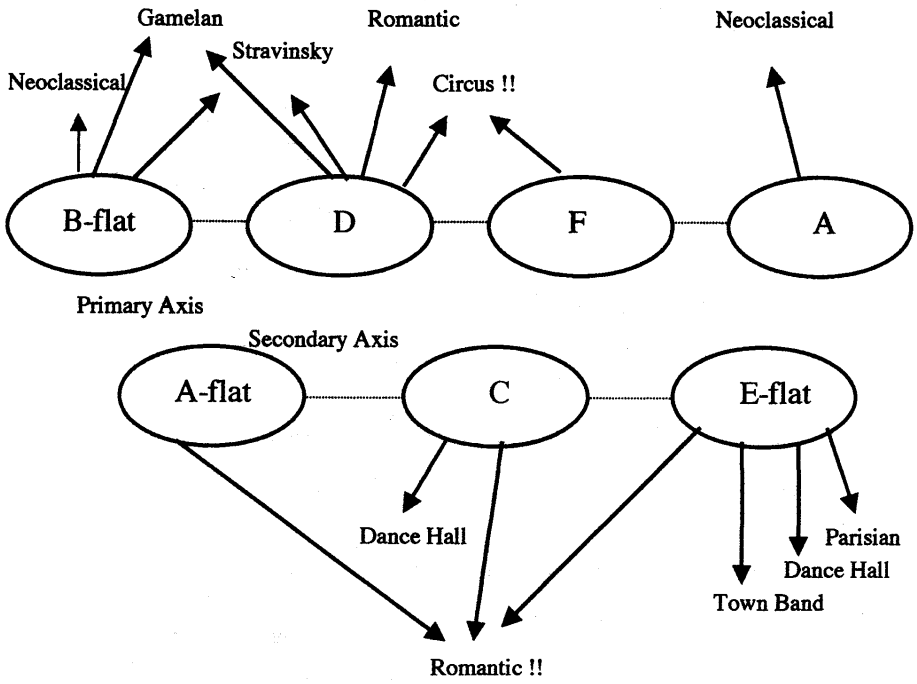
binary conflict between the west and the east, with the latter represented by the gamelan music in the lengthy epilogue. As Table3. 2 illustrates, the former category accounts for nearly all musical styles, with the notable exception being the gamelan music.

Having established a hermeneutic framework for the first movement, I will now turn my attention to the relationship *between* the musical masks and the tonal axes themselves. I will attempt, to borrow Kofi Agawu's apt phrasing, to "play with signs" and delve deeper into Poulenc's contradictions. Example 3.17 illustrates the association of each musical mask with either the primary or secondary axis by means of their respective tonal centers.

Table 3.16
3 levels of binary oppositions in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



Example 3.17
Tonal axes and associated musical masks in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



The primary axis embodies the Stravinsky, neo-classical, circus, romantic, and gamelan masks, while the secondary axis embodies the dance hall, romantic, Parisian, and town-band masks. From these axial associations a general principle can be made with regard to the structure of the first movement: the primary axis embodies all masks of high culture (with the notable exception of the circus mask in mm. 47-54), while the secondary axis is marked by the remaining masks of low culture.

Kramer's third hermeneutic window of structural trope, a type that includes a structural procedure which functions as a typical expressive act within a cultural/historical framework, can open-up the possibility for a subtle hermeneutic interpretation of the Concerto. I likewise find Susan McClary's work on interpreting "absolute" music useful in that she focuses on interlocking narrative schemata and tonality in the sonata principle.[77] She shows that while tonal compositions in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries end in the same key in which they began, the tonal goal is only truly meaningful if it is called into question by "Other" keys, which must ultimately be purged for the sake of tonal closure. McClary distances herself from other critics by seeing this practice as stemming from identity politics, between self and Other, predetermined by a sort

[77] Susan McClary, "Narrative Agendas in "Absolute" Music: Identity and Difference in Brahms's Third Symphony," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, Ruth A. Solie, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 326-344. In addition, see Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

of absolutist political narrative in the sonata procedure. McClary likewise argues that the two initial key areas (tonic and its primary Other) are further marked by distinctive themes. James Webster provides the following account of the narrative consequences of the sonata procedure:

> The second group in the exposition presents important material and closes with a sense of finality, but it is not in the tonic. This dichotomy creates a "large-scale dissonance" that must be resolved. The "sonata principle" requires that the most important ideas and the strongest cadential passages from the second group reappear in the recapitulation, but now transposed to the tonic. The subtle tension of stating important material in another key is thus "grounded," and the movement can end.[78]

Conceptualizing against the backdrop of A.B. Marx's thematic characterizations, McClary considers the political consequences of a masculine first theme and a feminine second theme within the sonata narrative.[79] She convincingly argues that since the "masculine" and "feminine" themes are pre-arranged in particular slots, there is no possibility for a *feminine ending* since their fates are cast before the composition begins. In short, the "masculine" tonic will triumph, while the "feminine" Other will be purged for the sake of narrative and tonal closure.

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[78] James Webster, "Sonata Form, " *The New Grove Dictionary*, vol. 17, 498.

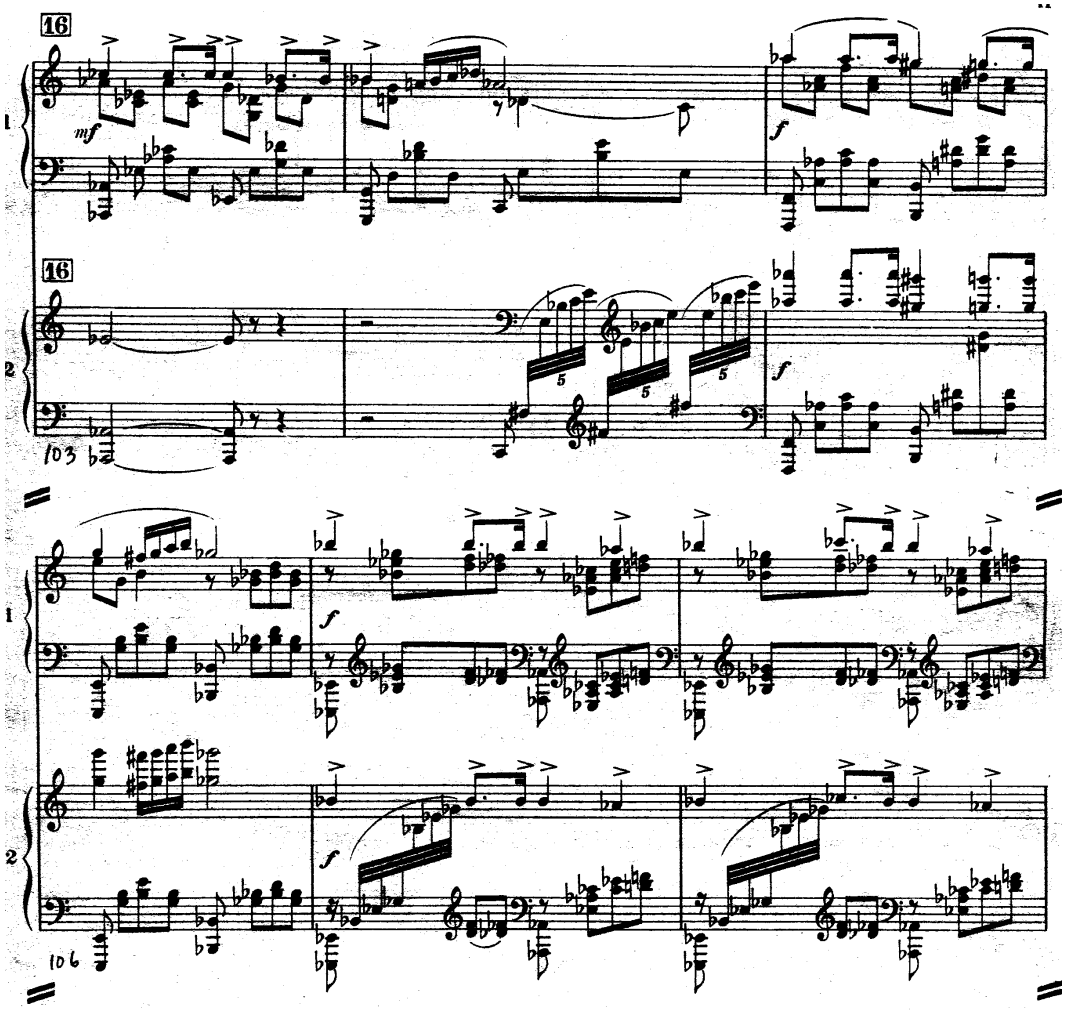
[79] On page 332, McClary, "Narrative Agendas in "Absolute" Music," provides a quote from Marx as cited and translated in a communication from Peter Bloom to *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27 (1974): 162. Marx wrote in 1845: "The second theme, on the other hand, serves as contrast to the first, energetic statement, though dependent on and determined by it. It is of a more tender nature, flexibly rather than emphatically constructed—in a way, the feminine as opposed to the preceding masculine."

Even though the first movement of Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos* is not in sonata form *per se*, there are similarities between its structure with that of the tonic and its primary Other of the sonata procedure. In the case of the Concerto, the "tonic" can be seen as consisting of the primary tonal axis of B♭ / D / F / A, while the "primary Other" (or the "large-scale dissonance") is the secondary tonal axis of A♭ / C / E♭. As we have seen in Example 3, the axial polarity is resolved in favor of the primary tonal axis, the "tonic," and hence the movement can end. We could further read the narrative implications of the Concerto against the backdrop of McClary's identity politics, in that the primary axis, with its association with high culture, can be labeled as "masculine," and the secondary axis, with its association with low culture, as "feminine."[80] Poulenc's working-out of cultural politics is much more slippery, however, than McClary's exegesis of a political narrative in "absolute" music. To elaborate, I will concentrate on Poulenc's wearing of the romantic mask at the masked ball (see Example 3.18).

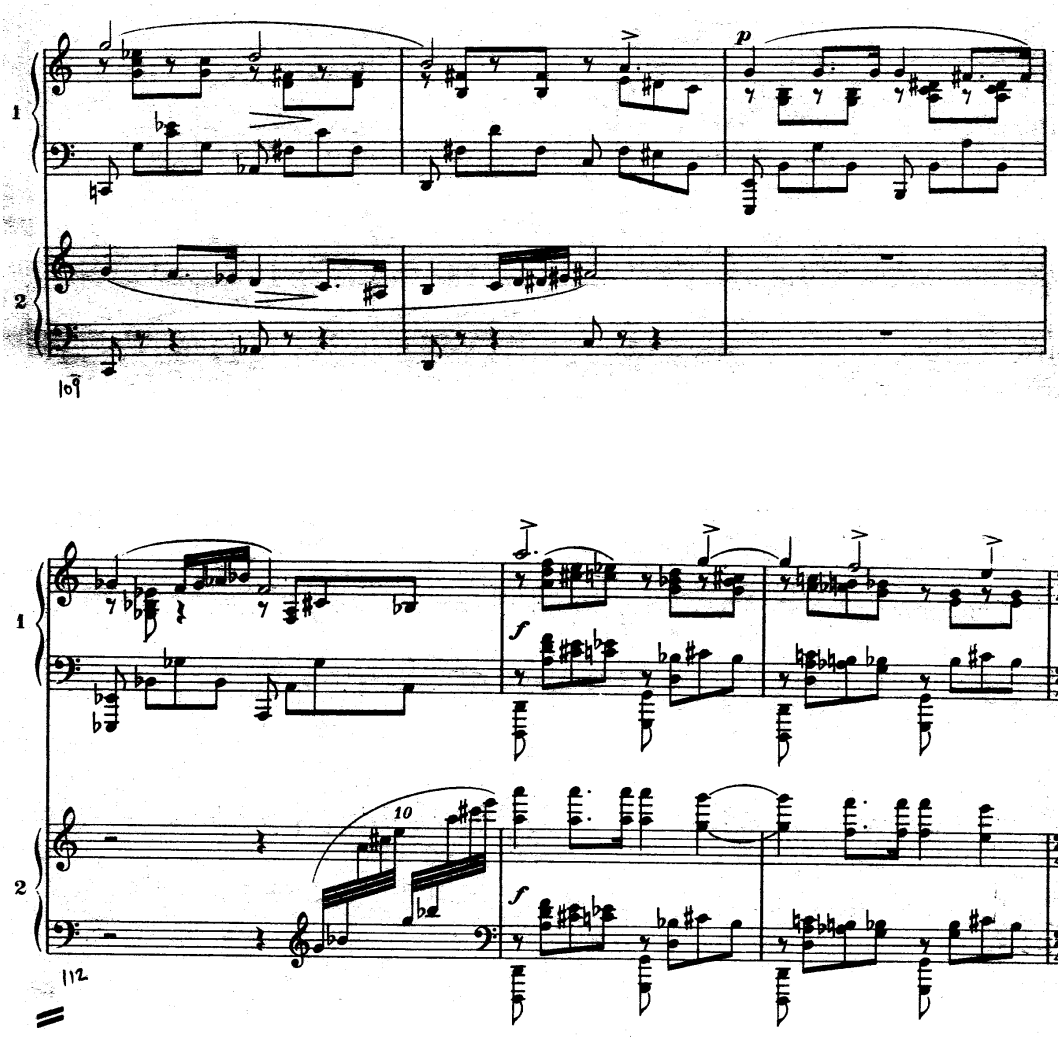
Perhaps Poulenc's treatment of the romantic style might be taken as ironic since most of the passage appears in the tonalities of the secondary axis, an axis primarily associated with low culture in the movement. We might hear this

[80] My reading of high and low culture in terms of gender-labeling has been influenced by Andreas Huyssen's "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in his *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 44-62.

Example 3.18
Theme 5, romantic mask in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



Example 3.18, continued



passage in terms of a "romantic dissonance" on account of its thematic material being presented on the *wrong axis*: namely, the secondary axis of A♭ (mm. 103-104), E♭ (mm. 107-108), C (mm. 109-110), and E♭ (m. 112). However, the passage culminates with a final statement transposed to the primary axis, as represented by the tonality of D in mm. 113-14. But rather than seeing this as mere identity politics, between self and Other where the Other is "grounded" by an authoritarian tonality, I would like for us to consider Poulenc's ambivalent treatment of tonality as part and parcel of his ambivalence toward high and low culture in general. The following suggestive remark by Poulenc himself underscores his cultural ambivalence: "From childhood onward I've associated café tunes with the Couperin Suites in a common love *without distinguishing between them*."[81] Furthermore, the tonal association of the romantic mask on the secondary axis symbolically interlocks high with low culture, blurring the boundaries between the two. It is in this modern space where high meets low, where present meets past, where boundaries are destabilized and questioned, that Poulenc ultimately reaffirms our links with our traditions and our roots. Poulenc's wearing of the romantic mask thus evokes a mood of nostalgia, a bittersweet hue of a composer standing at aesthetic crossroads.

Even though Poulenc never appears without a mask in the movement, it is my hope that my interpretation has sparked the reader's imagination to consider

[81] Francis Poulenc, *My Friends and Myself* (1963), trans. James Harding (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 31. My emphasis.

for him- or herself what Poulenc might ultimately look like underneath. While it's certainly no easy quest to hear any neoclassical composer's voice, have we perhaps heard Poulenc's in his *Concerto for Two Pianos*? I believe the paradox of Poulenc's romantic masking of the secondary axis may suggest that a decade after *The Cock and the Harlequin* was written, Poulenc's vision of romanticism was no longer the same as that of Cocteau's. The culmination of this passage on the tonality of D, the exact spot in the movement where the polarity within the primary axis is resolved, may ultimately symbolize the aesthetic polarity widening between Cocteau and Poulenc. In fact, we might interpret the weight given to the romantic mask by this tonal center, and its associated tonal axis, as ultimately foreshadowing Poulenc's later stylistic change towards romanticism, which would occur four years later in 1936 and last until 1952. According to David Drew, Poulenc's earlier works from 1918-1935 were not a true reflection of his musical personality, but rather, he had simply been following the anti-romantic sentiment propagated by Cocteau.[82] My interpretation of the first movement of the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, however, suggests that as early as 1932 Poulenc would no longer blindly follow Cocteau, his one-time aesthetic guru. Indeed, might my interpretation, which synthesizes tonal axes with musical topics, reveal the "man behind the mask?"

[82] Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style*, 98.

Chapter 4

"If *Aubade* purports to be the story of Diana, it also tells us something about Poulenc."
--James Harding

"My music is my portrait."
--Francis Poulenc

Sexualizing the Exotic: Evocation and Meaning of the Gamelan in Poulenc's *Aubade* and the *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor

Introduction

In his recent study of western depictions of gamelan music, Mervyn Cooke pinpoints Debussy as the first western composer to absorb elements from Indonesian music.[83] Debussy, influenced by the ethnic sounds he first heard at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889, wrote to a friend and asked: "Do you not remember the Javanese music, able to express every shade of meaning, even unmentionable shades, and which makes our tonic and dominant seem like ghosts?"[84] Debussy likewise characterizes the texture of the gamelan in a later article in the following way: "Javanese music is based on a type of counterpoint

[83] Mervyn Cooke, ""The East in the West": Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, Jonathan Bellman, ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 258.
[84] For the full text of the letter, see *Debussy Letters*, ed. Francois Lesure and Roger Nichols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 76.

by comparison with which that of Palestrina is child's play. And if we listen without European prejudice to the charm of their percussion, we must confess that our percussion is like primitive noises at a country fair." [85] Cooke arranges Debussy's subsequent gamelan-like techniques into four categories, which he sees, to some extent, as being interrelated: (1) *scalar types*, such as ancient church modes, octatonic, whole tone, and pentatonic, (2) stratified, superimposed *ostinato patterns*, (3) *polyphonic textures*, and (4) *sonorities* that reinforce the static nature of Debussy's nonfunctional harmony. Of these four categories I will briefly elaborate on the first three, which will later be shown to have striking similarities with Poulenc's depiction of the gamelan in his *Aubade* (1929) and the *Concerto for Two Pianos* (1932).

With respect to the first category, Debussy valorizes scalar types able to break free from the hegemony of nineteenth-century Austro-Germanic music, which Debussy sees as outmoded on account of its notions of consonance, dissonance, and resolution. Cooke pinpoints only one work by Debussy that uses the pentatonic scale in a purely oriental context, the piano piece "Pagodes" from his *Estampes* of 1903. Cooke points out that the anhemitonic pentatonic scale of B, C#, D#, F#, G# (a transposition of the all-black-note pentatonic scale) is initially contained in the movement within the western framework of a B major triad, reflecting "Debussy's inevitably Westernized perception of the gamelan's

[85] Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 1:115.

pentatonic tuning."[86] Likewise, Cooke adds that later in the piece even though the pentatonicism is able to roam freely without a clear-cut tonal focus, the pentatonic melody is synthetically harmonized by chromatic chords, illustrating, once again, how the eastern gamelan is contained within the parameters of a western framework. In addition, Cooke's second and third categories highlight how the polyphonic texture of the gamelan is built from stratified, superimposed ostinato patterns. Returning to Debussy's "Pagodes," Cooke suggests that its polyphonic texture is highly reminiscent of an authentic gamelan since its lowest texture consists of the slowest-moving patterns, while each subsequent texture moves more quickly depending on its range – the fastest figuration occurs in the highest register.[87] Cooke understands Debussy's valorization of stratified layers as a revolt against the traditional melody-plus-accompaniment textures of most nineteenth-century music, a revolt that we have also seen in Poulenc's adaptation of the cubist aesthetic of fragmentation in his *Mouvements Perpétuels*.

In addition to Debussy, Cooke surveys other western evocations of the gamelan, such as Colin McPhee's pioneering *Balinese Ceremonial Music* of 1940, three transcriptions for two pianos that provide a comprehensive introduction to the styles and scalar types of Balinese music. The first Balinese scale, known as *saih gender wayang*, is analogous to the anhemitonic pentatonic scale previously encountered in Debussy's "Pagodes," while the second pentatonic scale of B♭, D,

[86] Cooke, ""The East in the West:" Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music," 260-261.
[87] Cooke, ""The East in the West:" Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music," 262.

E♭, F, A, known as *saih pitu*, is considered more exotically dissonant.[88] Cooke does not offer an explanation for describing the second scale as more "dissonant" than the first, but one can surmise that it is probably due to the two half-step relationships found within the scale: namely, D/E♭ and A/B♭. Cooke isolates the second Balinese scale as a possible exotic source of Poulenc's evocation of the gamelan in his *Concerto for Two Pianos*, which I understand as being projected from a *tonal* framework—I will return to this point in my discussion of the Concerto below. In addition, Cooke underscores the significance of a stratified polyphonic texture in Percy Grainger's *Random Round* of 1912, an aleatory work built up from between ten and twenty melodic fragments; tempo and melodic fragment are left to the discretion of the individual performer. Grainger himself offers the following description of the work's significance after a 1914 performance in London:

> Several of [the 15 musicians] taking part quickly developed the power of merging themselves into the artistic whole…I look forward to some day presenting to...American audiences a performance of this blend of modern harmonic tendencies with experiences drawn from the improvised polyphony of primitive music.[89]

One can't help but infer Grainger's prophetic description of music making as communal, primitive even, highly reminiscent of the drum circles that are popular

[88] Cooke, ""The East in the West:" Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music," 270.
[89] Grainger, as quoted in Cooke, ""The East in the West:" Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music," 268.

today. Most often these drum circles consist of 10 (or more) drummers playing various rhythms that merge within the artistic, communal whole.[90] Moreover, Grainger's *Random Round* foreshadows the later critical impulse of composers, like John Cage, to explore compositional possibilities in aleatory music, a musical practice that today has taken on a life of its own in popular culture. From the above survey we have witnessed how western composers have attempted to evoke the sounds and musical practices of the east in a western context. We need to now ask ourselves the following question: What is at stake with such notions of eastern representation?

The Homosexual Other

Philip Brett's contribution to Britten scholarship has focused on orientalism in his operas; I find Britten's music, and Brett's critical work in particular, an excellent model for my own thinking about Poulenc's evocation and meaning of the gamelan. To elaborate, I will briefly discuss the dramatic role of the gamelan in two of Britten's operas, *The Turn of the Screw* (1954) and *Death in Venice* (1972-1973).[91]

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[90] I have become familiar with drum circles while living in Austin, Texas as a graduate student (1995-2002). These impromptu circles occur at social gatherings, such as ones often encountered at Barton Springs Pool.

[91] My discussion of Britten's operas is indebted to Philip Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 235-256, and his "Britten's Dream," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, Ruth Solie, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 259-280.

Brett reads the dramatic role of the gamelan in both operas against the backdrop of Edward Said's critical work on orientalism, which Said sees as being bound up with questions of *power*, where subjects (according to the imperialist fantasy) beg to be subjected by rulers.[92] Brett pinpoints a sentence in Said's text that will serve as his critical springboard for his own study of *eros* in Britten's operas. Said writes, "Why the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generation energies, is something on which one could speculate."[93] While Said leaves the notion of sexuality aside, what Brett reads as a "failure of nerve," Brett will address head-on in Britten's operas: namely, the notion of the musical exotic as a "*projection* of a male sexual fantasy."[94]

Building on the work of Susan McClary, in which she reads the title figure of *Carmen* within a particularly feminist context—Carmen represents the exotic female Other, desired yet forbidden[95]—Brett considers how the marked category of "oriental" can be read as an exotic homosexual Other in the context of Britten's operas. In *The Turn of the Screw*, for instance, the device of the exotic is attached to Peter Quint, a ghost, who is marked as Other on account of his homosexual desire for the young Miles, whom the Governess must protect at all cost. Since

[92] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).
[93] Said, *Orientalism*, 188.
[94] Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas," 236.
[95] See Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet: Carmen*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

one of the main tenets of Henry James' story is that of "sexual awakening" in children, Brett reads the opera against the backdrop of the antimasturbation campaign of the nineteenth century, which he convincingly shows evolved into an antihomosexual campaign.[96] In both cases the individual is "depraved" on account of either his solitary activity or his homosexual desire, both of which are considered outside the norms of society in that they are not the "proper" channeling of desire. The following words by Michael Moon, as quoted by Brett, depict the mechanism of depravity at work in the story:

> One has only to recall how much in the tale turns on the mystery (or non-mystery) of little Miles's having been sent down from school for shocking misconduct toward some of his schoolmates—conduct into which he may have been earlier been initiated by the literally haunting figure of Peter Quint—to perceive how resonant the figures of the boy and his corrupter, figures first disseminated on a mass scale in male-purity discourse, remained in the imagination of James and many of his readers.[97]

Brett considers Britten's identification with Quint as Other, or *corrupter*, since Britten himself was homosexual and often held attraction for young boys, such as David Hemmings, the Miles in the original production of the opera. While Brett makes clear that Britten's attraction for Hemmings manifest itself as tender and fatherly affections toward the boy (he never sexually exploited the child), Brett sees the opera as a possible means for Britten to blur life with art and express his

[96] Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas," 244.
[97] Michael Moon, "Disseminating Whitman," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989): 255.

"darker side" of his own reality.[98] In addition, two decades after *The Turn of the Screw* Britten would return to the theme of man/boy desire in his last opera, *Death in Venice*. Aschenbach, the adult male lover, yearns for Tadzio, the inarticulate boy to whom the device of the exotic is mapped on to. Britten cast the boy as a silent dancer accompanied solely by oriental music colored by gamelan scales, textures, and sonorities, which Brett understands as projected from Aschenbach's point of view (or his gaze) since he desires the boy who is marked as Other. The opera ends with Tadzio leaving Aschenbach crumpled on stage, alone, possibly signifying the horrors of a "coming out" drama since this is the first time that the aging writer has succumbed to the beauty of the adolescent male, or admitted to himself that he has same-sex desire.[99] Brett raises an intriguing question which he leaves open for the reader to ponder for him- or herself: "Do we understand, then, the demonizing of the homosexual through the orientalism of these works as a means of expressing fear, shame, and defiance all at once?"[100] While such a question remains fodder for future Britten scholarship, I would like to consider this question with respect to Poulenc's music and his homosexuality since he, too, expresses the "darker side" of his own reality via the gamelan.

[98] Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas," 249.
[99] Brett," Britten's Dream," 279.
[100] Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas," 250.

Musical Exoticism in *Aubade* and the *Concerto for Two Pianos*

In a letter written to an admirer late in his life, Francis Poulenc describes himself in the following way:

> To a lady in Kamtchatka who would write to me to ask what I am like, I would send my portrait at the piano by Cocteau, my portrait by Bérard, *The Masked Ball*, and the *Motets for a time of penitence*, I believe she would then have a very exact idea of Poulenc-Janus.[101]

While this description can be regarded as an attempt by Poulenc to paint a picture of himself in rather broad brushstrokes, it nevertheless contains a kernel of truth from which the myth of Poulenc has emerged. In the apt words of Pierre Bernac, his long-time collaborator and friend, Poulenc's two-sided, or Janus-faced, personality can best be understood in terms of a "ragamuffin," as portrayed in *The Masked Ball* (1932), and as a "monk," witnessed in the Motets (1938-39).[102] The polarity of the sacred and the profane applies strikingly well to a vast majority of Poulenc's compositions, but what about those works that don't fit so neatly into this model? What about those works that occupy "tragic spaces" that we most often associate with romantic composers? It is in such a space that I would like to propose that we hear his *Aubade* (1929), a choreographic concerto for a dancer, pianist (Poulenc himself in the first performance), and a chamber orchestra of eighteen instruments.

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[101] Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man & His Songs* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 36.
[102] Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man & His Songs*, 36.

The lead dancer in *Aubade* represents Diana, goddess of chastity. In *Dancing with Goddesses: Archetypes, Poetry, and Empowerment*, Annis Pratt points out that the figure of Diana is most often associated with "fertility," as she presides over births and indeed over all aspects of women's biological seasons.[103] Diana is also more at home in nature than in the confines of patriarchal culture. Her opposition to being confined by culture manifests itself as a resistance to marriage and an amarital feminine sexuality, posed as an alternative to the approved sexuality of the patriarchal order. The forest, where she makes her home, represents a space free of the constraints of culture.

The scenario of *Aubade*, written by Poulenc himself, deals with Diana's rebellion against the divine law that condemns her to eternal chastity. According to the composer, "the only plot I acknowledge, and it's mine, is the simple story of Diana condemned to chastity. For her, every dawn is a reason for sadness." [104] Themes of solitude, melancholy, and anguish are evident in Poulenc's scenario of the ballet, which he provides in the score:

> A clearing at dawn. Diana's companions awaken, one by one, anguished by a sad foreboding. Diana, burning with a love that ravishes her purity, passes among them, her clothes disheveled. Her friends bustle about dressing her. She submits begrudgingly. Yet she presses the hunting bow that they give her to her breast and dances a moving and humble variation. She throws away her bow and falls into despair. She seeks refuge in the woods, but returns quickly. Her companions surround her. Diana begs

[103] Annis Pratt, *Dancing with Goddesses: Archetypes, Poetry, and Empowerment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
[104] Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man & His Songs*, 52.

> them to let her go. Suddenly, taking advantage of their confusion, she again leaps toward the woods. Dismayed, the women stare at the spot she has vacated, glimpsing only her arm as it waves them a final adieu. They tumble to the ground exhausted, and gradually fall asleep. It is morning.[105]

The ballet tells of Diana's passionate, but impure desire. There is a sense that Diana herself is afraid of it as she hurls away her bow, unable to take part in a pre-puberty love-rite with her female attendants. The forest is the only place where she feels comfortable—the hunt might even serve as a displacement for her sexual desire.

In later productions of the ballet Poulenc's plot was ignored. George Balanchine, for instance, substituted the myth of Diana and Acteon, destroying Poulenc's original intention of feminine solitude. Poulenc was so outraged by this substitution that he wrote:

> To ignore my libretto is to falsify entirely the intention of the music. At a period of my life when I was feeling very sad, I found that dawn was the time when my anguish reached its height, for it meant that one had to live through another horrible day. I wanted to give a detached rendering of this impression, so I chose Diana as my symbolic heroine.[106]

Poulenc's words open up an interpretive space to examine Diana as an autobiographical allegory of his own situation. This reading is given credence by Poulenc's description of the ballet as "amphibious," since the protagonist's role is

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[105] Keith Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982), 141.
[106] Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style*, 142.

divided and shared between the female dancer onstage and the pianist in the pit. (Poulenc played piano in the first performance of the ballet.) Thus, both Poulenc's biography and his music can reveal connections between Diana's rebellious nature and his own.

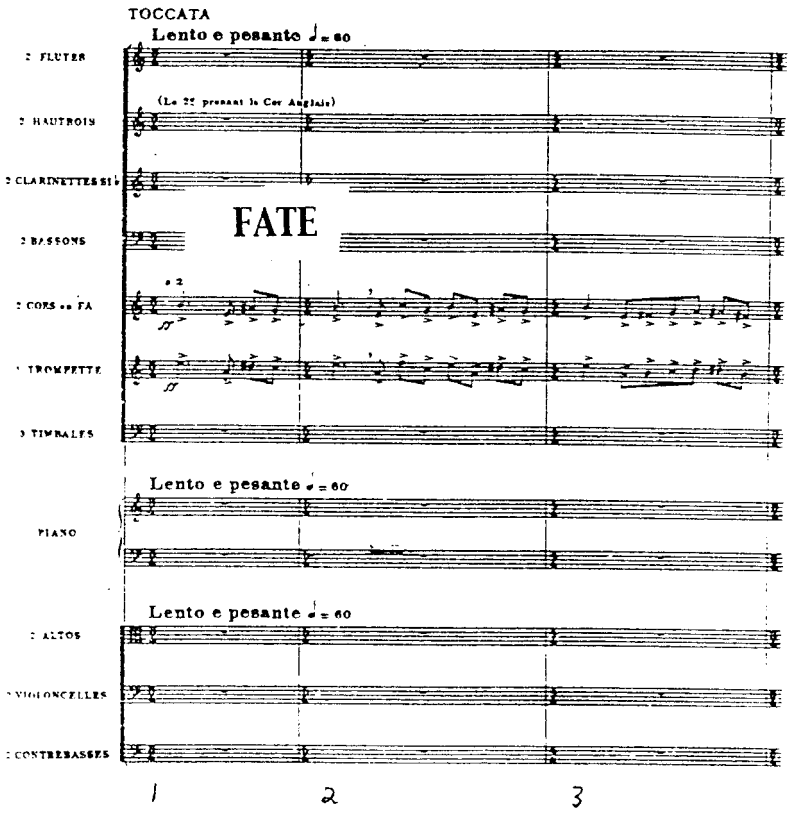
Taking somewhat of a different perspective on *Aubade* than Benjamin Ivry does in his recent biography of the composer, [107] I would like to propose that Poulenc's ballet was not inspired solely by a particular lover; rather its meaning stems more broadly from Poulenc's attempt to come to terms with his sexual identity in the late 1920s. As Poulenc approached thirty, he was forced to confront societal pressures to marry. In an attempt to put a stop to false engagement rumors, he considered the possibility of a "marriage of convenience" to Raymonde Linossier, a relationship that would also allow Poulenc to appropriate a heterosexual lifestyle. Linossier, however, turned down the proposal. It was after this that Poulenc found his first great love, Richard Chanlaire. This love affair would soon take its toll on Poulenc, as he told friends that he had lost his sense of identity. According to Ivry, in the late 1920s Poulenc associated gay sex with impurity and could therefore never truly accept his relationship, let alone a gay identity. This conflict is imperative for my gay reading of *Aubade*.

[107] Benjamin Ivry, *Francis Poulenc* (London: Phaidon Limited Press, 1996), 9.

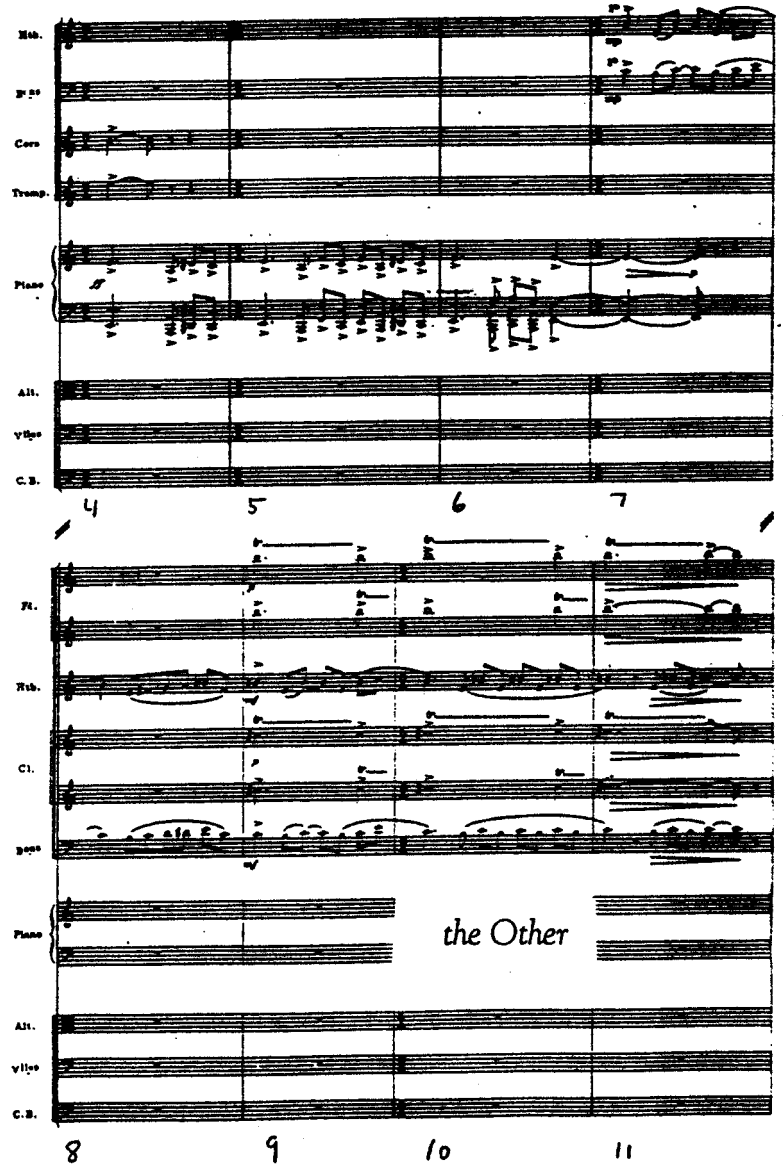
The first movement occurs with the curtain lowered, placing special emphasis on the music itself; it is within this context that we encounter three important musical agents: namely, Fate, Poulenc, and the Other.[108] The first musical idea presented is the Fate Theme, harshly scored for horns and trumpets (see Example 4.1). This theme, which occurs throughout the ballet, evokes an ominous foreboding through its stark open octaves, dry accents, and a dynamic level of *fortissimo*. The pitch material of the Fate Theme is drawn from an A minor triad, with ♭6 (F) and ♯4 (D♯) being emphasized as double-neighbors to E. These half steps press in on E's space, creating a sense of claustrophobia in an otherwise octatonic melody. The piano next takes over the ominous theme, making slight changes toward the end of its statement with vertical projections of pitches from an F major triad, thus breaking free from the pattern of bare octaves. Such a deployment out of tonality in both statements is suggestive of what Joseph Straus calls a tonal axis, in which two tonal centers within an axis of third related tonalities struggle for polarity, or independence from each other.[109] The two competing tonalities of A minor and F major I will refer to as the Fate Axis: F/A/C/E.

[108] My discussion of "fictional musical agents" has been influenced by Fred Maus's excellent article "Music as Drama" in *Music and Meaning*, Jenefer Robinson, ed. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), as well as Edward T. Cone's study *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).
[109] Joseph Straus, "Stravinsky's Tonal Axis," *Journal of Music Theory* 26.2 (1982): 261-290.

Example 4.1
Introduction of *Fate*, and *the Other*, mm. 1-11, *Aubade*

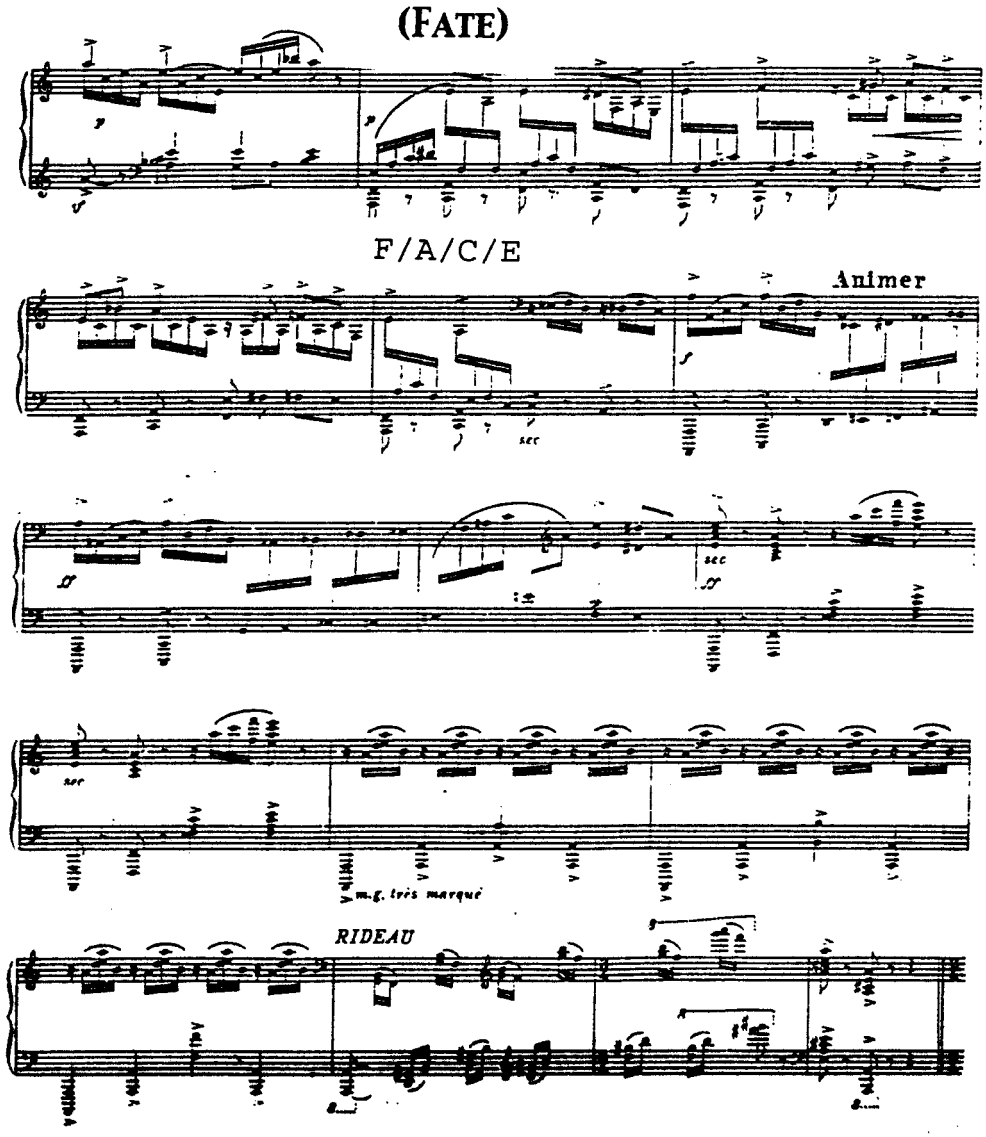


Example 4.1, continued



The dramatic role of the piano is significantly altered at Rehearsal 1, as it now is no longer an agent *for* Fate, as was the case earlier in mm. 4-7 with its immediate restatement of Fate material, but rather, it actively struggles *against* Fate in its search for identity; I refer to this agent as *Poulenc* himself. Throughout the section Poulenc's struggle against Fate is demonized by a sense of crazed hysteria evoked by the sudden change in tempo, marked *molto animato*. In mm. 50-64, Poulenc attempts to manipulate Fate by writing a hyper-masculine variation on its theme (see Example 4.2). That is, the pounding accompaniment in the left hand of the pianist and the incessant sixteenth notes, which seem to endlessly spin out, do not offer a chance for the pianist to catch his breath. The masculine variation ends with an abrupt statement of an A major triad, a signifier that *could* suggest transcendence in the work since the opening Fate Theme is associated with A minor. That is, the modal shift from minor to major, with its semiotic association of dark to light, could possibly suggest a narrative of self-acceptance of Fate in the ballet. The A major cadence here, however, suggests a heavy-handed, forced resolution, depicting a sense of self-acceptance by "hell or high water."

Example 4.2
Fate variation, Piano (*Poulenc*), Rehearsal 1, mm. 50-64, *Aubade*



To gain a better perspective of Poulenc's working out of identity politics between self and Other, consider the possible meaning of mm. 10-11, shown in Example 1. This passage is part of a larger transitional passage in which Fate Theme material is reworked by transposition and fragmentation. These two measures evoke the eastern sounds of a gamelan, as supported by three of Cooke's aforementioned categories for Debussy's gamelan-like techniques: namely, by its polyphonic texture consisting of stratified ostinato patterns in the bassoon and oboe lines, as well as the static quality further evoked by the flute and clarinet lines.

The last movement of *Aubade* expands on this oriental fantasy, with the three musical agents of Fate, Poulenc, and the Other featured in prominent roles once again. With respect to the action on stage, Diana's attendants gradually fall asleep as she has departed permanently into the forest, celibate and alone. As was the case in the first movement, the center of attention is once again on the piano in the orchestra.

The agent of the Other dominates the musical drama from Rehearsal 54 until the end of the work. Once again, the Other is characterized by superimposed ostinato patterns, as well as hypnotic bell-like sonorities in the right hand of the piano. Even the Fate Theme falls under its exotic charm: the bassoon and the violin depict an oriental variation on the theme, complete with sensuous chromaticism, while the pianist (Poulenc) projects the claustrophobic segment of

the theme (E, F and D#) with his left hand. A more ominous version of the Fate Theme returns in the horns at Rehearsal 55, perhaps signifying a refusal of the Other, a kind of musical celibacy that resists the draw of same-sex desire. The dramatic clash between the oriental Other and the ominous Fate Theme marks on a musical level, as it were, a kind of working through in sublimated form of Poulenc's profound ambivalence over his own sexuality.

The last movement supports this reading in two other meaningful ways. At Rehearsal 56, Poulenc's persona emerges once again in the piano with his rebellious music from Rehearsal 1 (refer to Example 4.2). His persona now appears as a hybrid with that of the Other, accompanied by the ominous Fate Theme in the tympani, now heard for the first time in the ballet in its purest musical form of a stripped-down A minor triad. The union of all three agents, which I imagine as encapsulating Poulenc's struggle to come to terms with his homosexuality, musically depicts the war raging within him: the moment he can acknowledge the various forces tearing at his self-identity. The piano, a symbol of Poulenc's agency, shifts gears once more and is transformed into an agent solely of the Other, where it remains until the end of the work. This transformation can suggest a moment of self-acceptance, recognition of the alien within the self. For Poulenc, it is not celibacy that wins out after all, as it does for Diana, but rather the embrace of the Other, a coming to terms with his gay identity. The identity between Poulenc and the Other in these concluding

measures underscores the surrender of his previous identity; the echo of the Fate Theme in the tympani falls like a heavy lament for the loss.

Tonally, the polarity of the Fate Axis is also projected throughout this section, adding to our sense of ambivalence over the identity of the Other. From Rehearsal 54 on, the basses arpeggiate an F major triad in first inversion, ambiguously marking both A and F as salient pitches, while the flutes arpeggiate an A minor triad in root position. The last statement of the piano mirrors this tonal ambivalence, as F remains active in an upper register, yearning yet unresolved, while the last pitch heard is an A in a lower register.

The Sacred and the Profane

My reading of *Aubade*, drawing on biographical evidence as well as Poulenc's own statements about the ballet, suggests a musical evocation of Poulenc's sexual ambivalence. We may better understand Poulenc's condition by considering his upbringing, which may roughly be divided into two distinct strands that can be characterized as hedonistic on the one hand, and spiritual on the other, recalling his own description of himself as Poulenc-Janus. Poulenc's hedonism, according to Benjamin Ivry, stems from both his mother and Uncle Papoum's adoration for Parisian popular culture. Ivry characterizes his mother as follows: "With a Parisian's turn-of-the-century gaiety, she added the lightness which became an essential part of Francis's personality; she preferred Mozart,

Chopin, and 'adorable bad music.'"[110] Years later Poulenc would dedicate his opera *Dialogues of the Carmelites* to 'the memory of my mother, who revealed music to me; to Claude Debussy, who gave me the taste for writing it.' By pairing the memory of his mother with that of Debussy, Poulenc clearly saw his mother as an influential musician in her own right. In addition, Ivry characterizes his Uncle Papoum (Marcel Royer) as a frenetic theater buff and opera fan, and suggests that for Poulenc, like the poet W.H. Auden and his "Uncle Henry," a "young homosexual creative artist can learn a lot from a wealthy bachelor uncle who is mad about the arts."[111] Poulenc's spiritual side, on the other hand, stems from his father's influence, a pious Catholic whose taste in music leaned toward Beethoven. In fact, after learning of his son's devotion to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, his traditionalist father told Poulenc, "poor boy, you do have odd taste in music!" [112] The following words by Keith Daniel bring the two faces of Poulenc within close contact of each other:

> Poulenc's father was devout, but far from dogmatic; indeed, he was a free thinker, and Poulenc's personal conception of religion can be traced to him. . .The…sensuality that pervades much of his religious music should not suggest that his belief was corrupt, weak, or even misdirected; rather, these qualities express a realistic humanistic interpretation of religious belief.[113]

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[110] Ivry, *Francis Poulenc*, 12.
[111] Ivry, *Francis Poulenc*, 12.
[112] Ivry, *Francis Poulenc*, 16.
[113] Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style*, 1.

Daniel's description may underscore his own anxiety that Poulenc's sacred music might be infected by his homosexuality, what Daniel codes as *sensuality*.

Four years after Poulenc's earlier foray into musical exoticism in *Aubade*, he would once again evoke the gamelan in his *Concerto for Two Pianos*, this time, however, using it as a powerful tool to draw together both his hedonistic and spiritual inclinations. Ironically, the *Concerto for Two Pianos* was written during a time when Poulenc was ideologically distanced from the Catholic Church. His spiritual separation initially occurred in 1917, the year in which his father passed away. Poulenc's spiritual "reawakening" would occur in 1936 after visiting the *Vierge Noire* (a statue of the Virgin Mary sculpted in black wood) at Rocamadour—this is the same year he composed his first religious music, *Litanies á la Vierge Noire*. It might come as a surprise, then, that the Concerto may unlock the spiritual secret behind Poulenc's sexual ambivalence. Example 4.3 provides in chart form a summary of Poulenc's evocation of the church and the gamelan (or the sacred and the profane) in all three movements of the *Concerto for Two Pianos*. The following discussion will elaborate on this chart.

The musical material of the opening measures in the first movement—the crashing chords followed by a two-part texture in sixteenth notes—alludes to Stravinsky's opening of the first movement of his *Symphony of Psalms*, which had had its premier two years earlier in 1930 (see Examples 4.4 and 4.5).

Example 4.3
Gamelan and Church topics in the *Concerto for Two Pianos* in D minor

Mvt I: Allegro ma non troppo

Topic:	Church *Symphony of Psalms* allusion	Church Organum	Gamelan Children's Lullaby Pitch, B, introduced mm. 173-180
Pitch Collection:	B♭ / D / F / A----------	B♭ / D / F / A--------	B♭ / D / F / A------
Measures: (Rehearsal #)	1-3	64-166 R. 24	169-194 R. 25

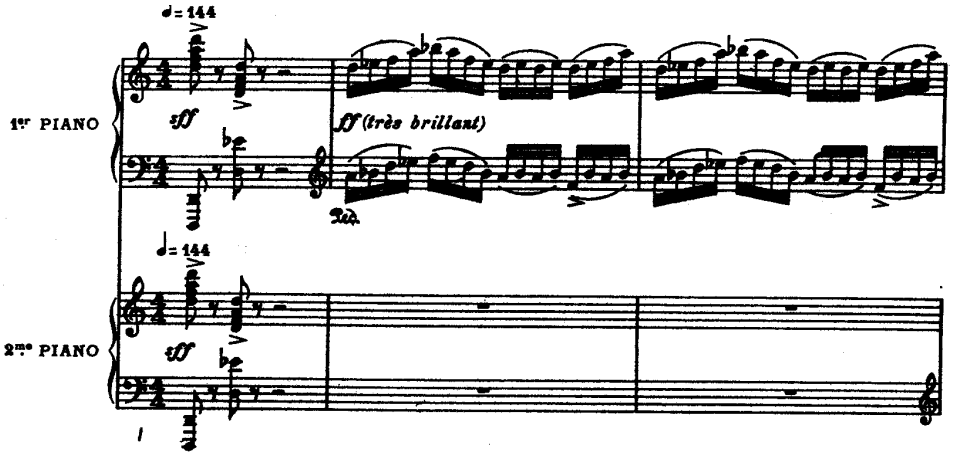
Mvt. II: Larghetto

Topic:	Gamelan Neoclassical transformation	
Pitch Collection:	-----B♭ / D / F / A	
Measures:	141-151	

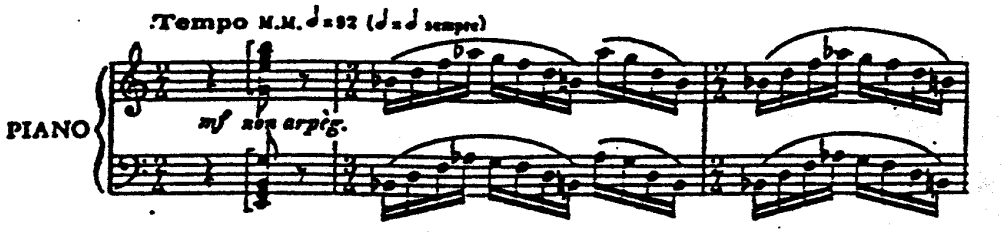
Mvt. III: Finale

Topic:	Gamelan	Church	Gamelan
Pitch Collection:	E minor (attempted B-C#-(D) voice leading)	D major (B♭ / A axial voice leading)	B♭ / D / F / A
Measures: (Rehearsal #)	236-259 R. 62	260	273-280 R. 68 and 69

Example 4.4
Poulenc, mm. 1-3 of the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



Example 4.5
Stravinsky, mm. 1-3 of *Symphony of Psalms*, I



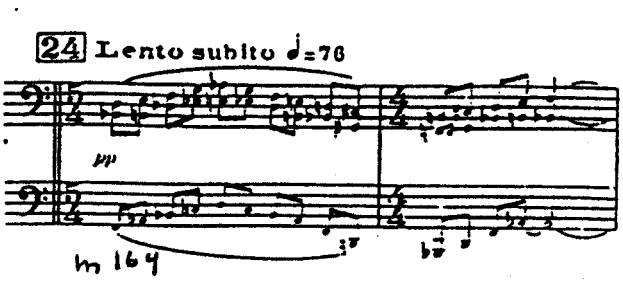
On account of this opening *Psalms* allusion, Poulenc evokes an intertextual link with Stravinsky's text, and in this case, suggests extra-musical imagery of a "stranger standing before God," as the following versus (12-13 of *Psalm 39*) associated with the first movement of the Symphony suggest:

> *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with Thee, and sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength: before I go hence and be no more.*

Poulenc's adaptation of this church topic is much more aggressive than that of Stravinsky's original, a point I will return to shortly.

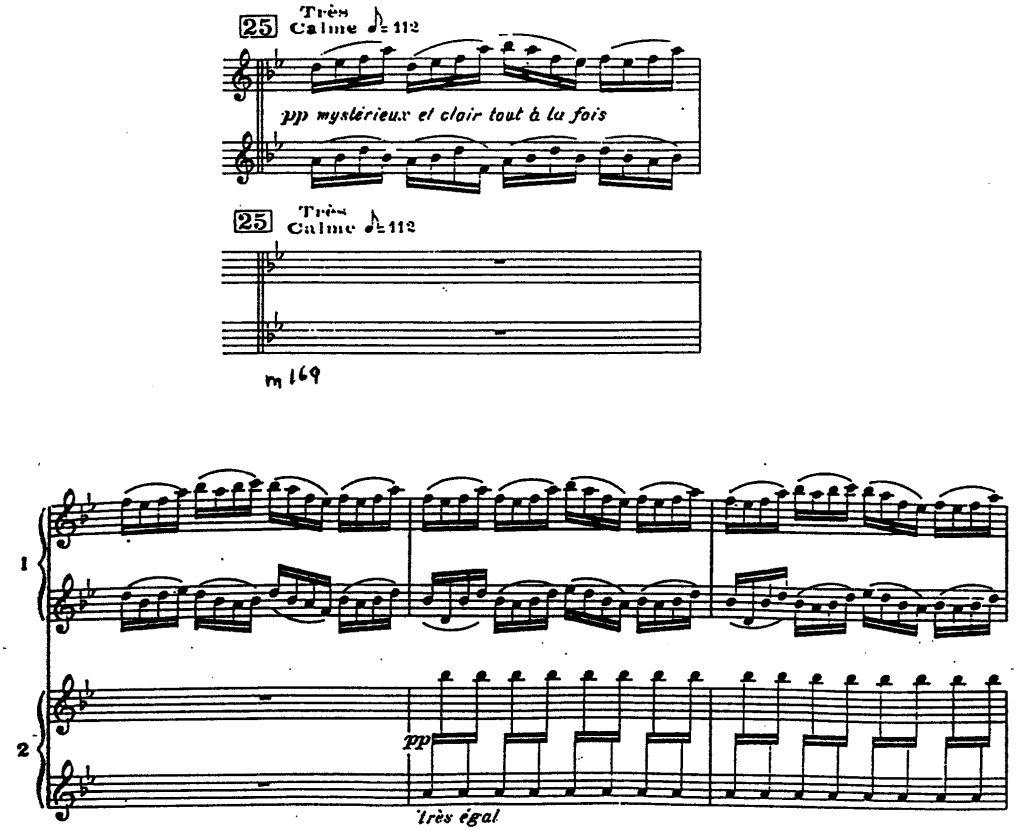
At Rehearsal 24 Poulenc recalls the opening church material, but makes significant modifications. Whereas the church topic that began the Concerto was harmonically and rhythmically aggressive, now the reference is reminiscent of medieval organum. As Example 4.6 illustrates, the slower tempo, dynamic marking of *pianissimo*, lower register, and chromaticism depict an enigmatic evocation of spirituality. However, this new vision of the Church is somewhat closer in spirit to that of Stravinsky's original because of the slower tempo marking, as well as the pitch material, which stems from the octatonic scale. In these two passages, Poulenc presents two manifestations of the Church that may suggest himself as alien, or distanced, from God: the first is rhythmically and harmonically aggressive, while the second is "muddy" sounding on account of its dense texture in a low register.

Example 4.6
Church topic (organum), *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I, Rehearsal 24



Immediately following the organum passage is a reference to the East as represented by the gamelan topic (see Example 4.7). This passage stems from the musical material of the opening *Symphony of Psalms* quotation in mm. 2-3, now transformed by superimposed, ostinato patterns in a polyphonic texture in both pianos. As was the case in *Aubade*, where Poulenc's evocation of the gamelan created a psychological space where he could address his sexual ambivalence, I want to propose that the Concerto expands on this theme by depicting the Church as a possible source for his ambivalence. By building his gamelan from such encoded, sacred material, we can imagine an autobiographical allegory of Poulenc's struggle to accept his homosexuality. This reading foregrounds Poulenc's homosexuality as a probable cause that is responsible for separating himself from God and the Church.

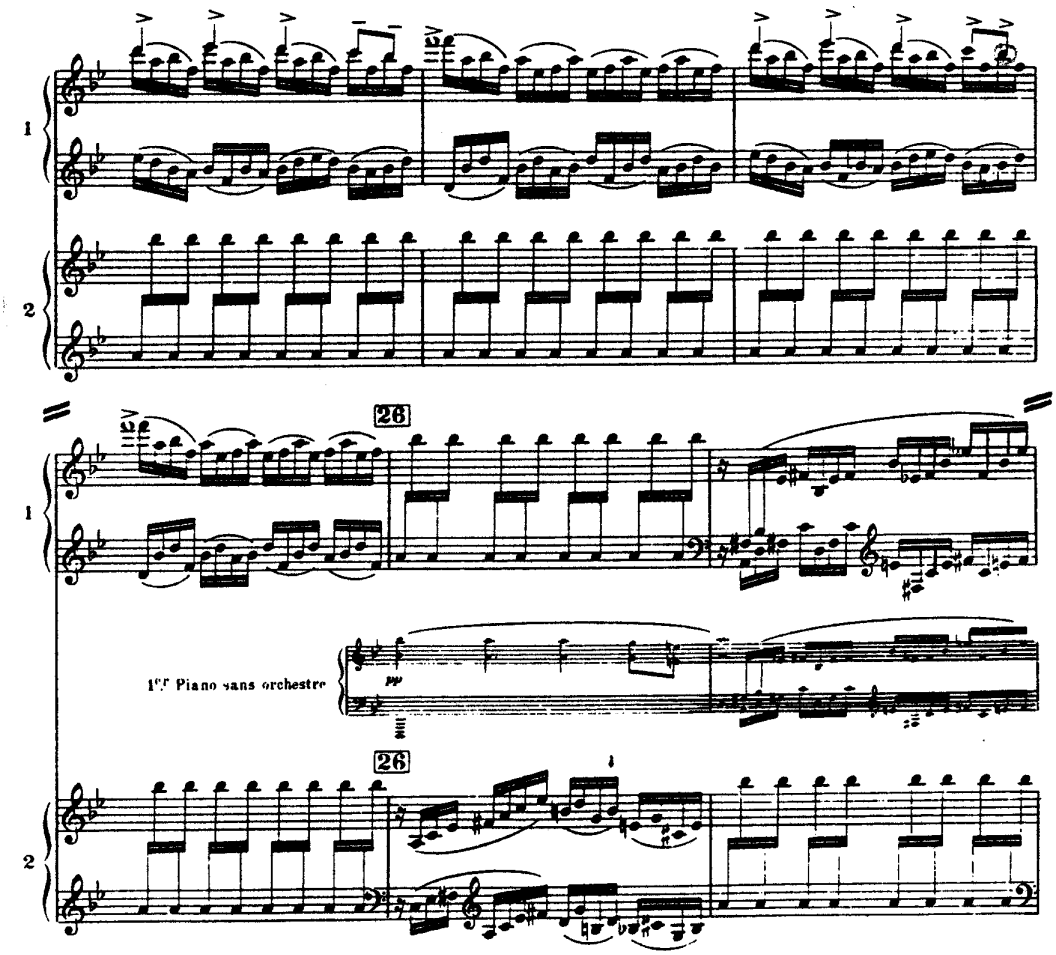
Example 4.7
Gamelan topic, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, Rehearsal 25



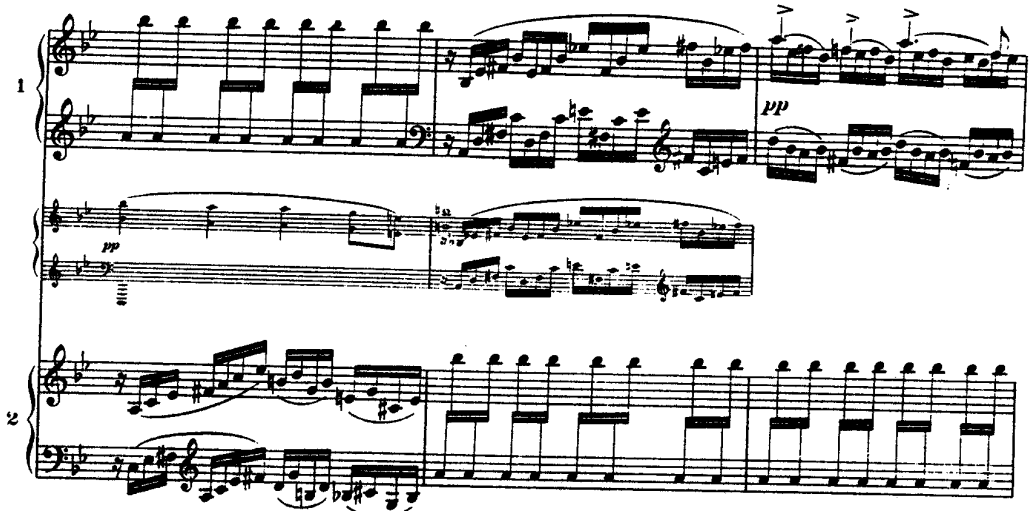
I hear in this oriental section a first attempt by Poulenc to find an intercession between his sexuality with that of culture, encompassing both values of patriarchy and those of the Church. As shown in Example 4.8, the simple melody in mm. 173-180 is reminiscent of a children's lullaby, stripped to the barest of essentials, floating innocently on the surface of the unyielding gamelan. At first, the juxtaposition of a Western child-like tune and Eastern gamelan prophesy that one day Poulenc will be able to break free from his repressive chains and attain the mythical freedom of the Other. This musical prophecy is an act of regression from the order of patriarchal culture with its pre-slotted sexual roles and stereotypes clearly defined. Both the gamelan and the lullaby represent an escape into the *primitive*, a space devoid of western cultural trappings.

Poulenc shrouds his primitive regression in indecision, however. For instance, the pitch-construction of the lullaby may initially support Poulenc's desired freedom away from culture in that the antecedent phrase is confined entirely to the tonal sphere of B♭ and the primary tonal axis of B♭ / D / F / A; at first Poulenc seems content to inhabit the exotic space of the Other. The consequent phrase, however, culminates with an agent that attempts to break away from the structure of the primary axis and its association with primitive regression. The last pitch of the lullaby, B♮, is not found on the primary axis. We should ultimately view its attempted escape *from* the Other as futile; the

Example 4.8
Juxtaposition of Lullaby and Gamelan topics, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, I



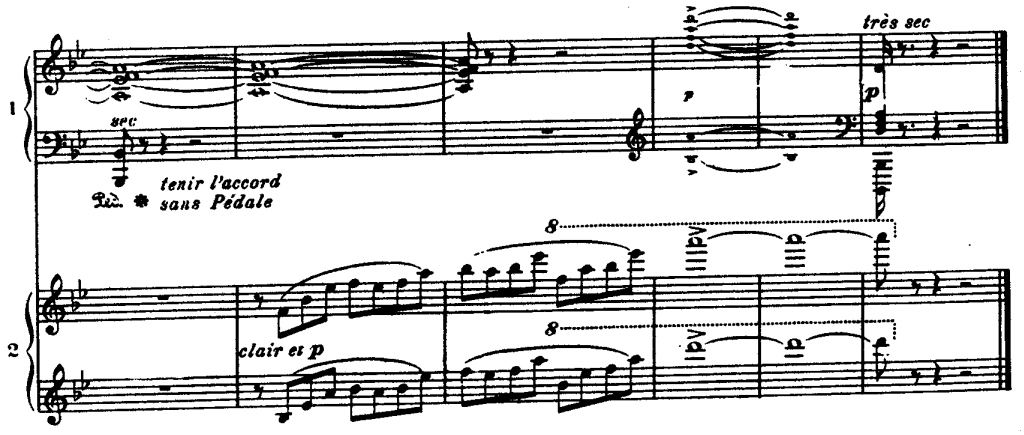
Example 4.8, continued



primary axis reasserts itself, negating the B♮, and remains in control throughout the remainder of the movement. On account of this "foreign element," Poulenc's flight into primitivism seems like an unsuccessful solution for his self-identity. That is, in the Epilogue his hedonistic side may be his dominant mode of self-expression, but the pitch B♮, which is left as a hermeneutic enigma, disallows for his complete escape into the homosexual Other. This double binding of his homosexuality by *desire*, as represented by musical primitivism, and *dread*, by the intrusive subversive agent that signals the most eerie moment in the Concerto, marks yet another instance of Poulenc's profound sexual ambivalence.

The gamelan topic next returns at the end of the second movement, as shown in Example 4.9. Stylistically it is somewhat transformed from the Eastern sounds evoked in the first movement, as it has taken on a Neo-Classical transformation marked by an ascending arpeggiation gesture. In fact, the gamelan topic has adapted itself to the musical style of the second movement, since both A sections in the Ternary form are roughly in the style of Mozart. In the gamelan passage, there is no subversive agent attempting to break out of the structural frame—the primary axis of B♭ / D / F / A is stated both harmonically in the eighth-note figurations as well as vertically as referential sonorities.

Example 4.9
Gamelan topic (Neo-Classical transformation), the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, II

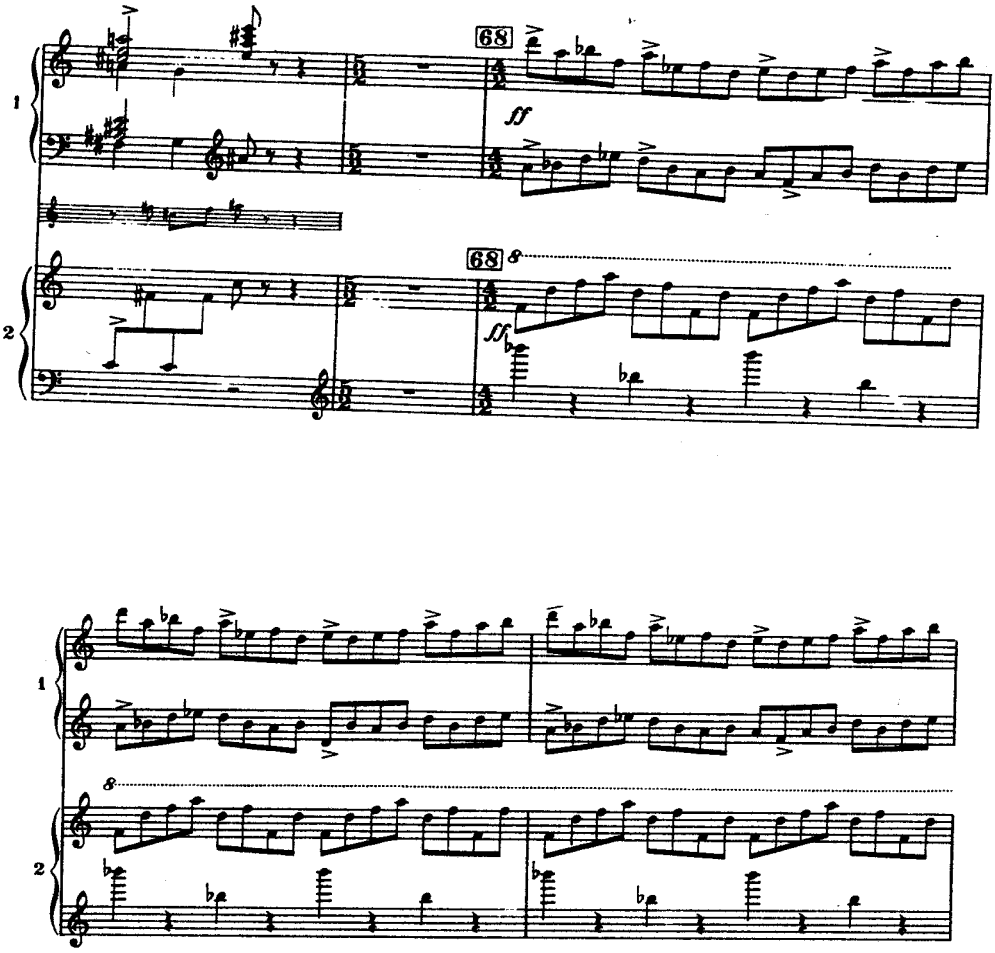


Like the previous two movements, the finale also ends with a gamelan section under the control of the primary axis. However, as shown in Example 4.10, the gamelan topic is expressed strikingly different than the previous manifestations. Now the gamelan is extremely loud and aggressively clattery on account of its punctuated accents in both hands of the pianists. The *Concerto for Two Pianos* thus ends with a *monstrous* evocation of the Other, but why?

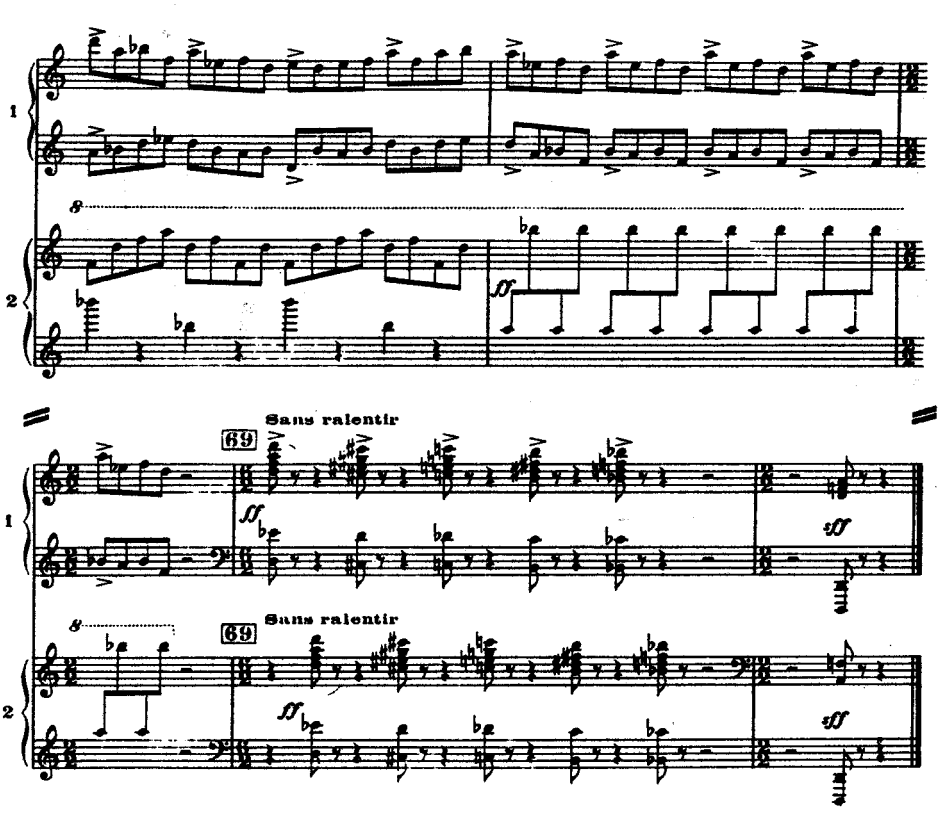
Rehearsal 62 might give us clues as to why the horror breaks out at the end of the Concerto. As seen in Example 4.11, this section is characterized by a lyrical melody in Piano 2 with a gamelan-like accompaniment in Piano 1, what I want to consider as representing self and the Other. This section is comparable to the oriental Epilogue of the first movement in that Poulenc-Janus once again attempts an intercession in his struggle to accept his gay identity. The connection between these two sections is further corroborated with a return of the marked pitch, B♮.

Throughout this pseudo-oriental section the B♮ is given prominence as a melodic pitch, and is further emphasized by its upper neighbor, C#. Perhaps we can interpret the B♮ as attempting to push upward and break free from the tonal control of the primary axis, with its earlier association of regression into the primitive Other, and find closure on the pitch D: that is, B-C#-D (this voice-leading motion is supported by predominant and dominant harmonies). By

Example 4.10
Gamelan topic (monstrous transformation), *Concerto for Two Pianos*, III, R. 68



Example 4.10, continued



considering D as the "real tonic" of the Concerto, we are once again considering a lower-level polarity of competing axial subsets (B♭ and D) within the primary tonal axis. Within this tonal context, I want to propose that the goal directed voice-leading motion of B-C#-D encodes the possibility of Poulenc's self-

acceptance of his homosexuality against the backdrop of culture, stemming from the marked pitch of B♮. Together Piano 1 and Piano 2 attempt the upward voice-leading motion of C# to D numerous times in the passage, but consistently get stuck on the C#. In other words, even in this pseudo-oriental context, where Poulenc-Janus attempts an intercession between his self and the Other, the B♮ is frustrated and undermined since C#, the leading tone to D, is unable to fulfill its natural voice-leading role. The culminating measures of this passage (four measures before Rehearsal 65) highlight the drama of B♮ in the Concerto: twice, Piano 1 repeats the melodic motive only to return back again to its starting pitch, B♮.

The aggressive outburst at Rehearsal 65 is a D major triad, a harmonic signifier that *could* provide a context for transcendence of the B-C#-D voice-leading motion supported by the harmonic progression of ii – V - I. The D major triad is no self-affirming chord, however. It is highly symbolic in that it serves as a metonym for the Church, recalling the opening, crashing chord of the *Symphony of Psalms* quotation in the first movement. Furthermore, after this aggressive outburst the pitch B♮ no longer attempts an intercession for Poulenc-Janus.

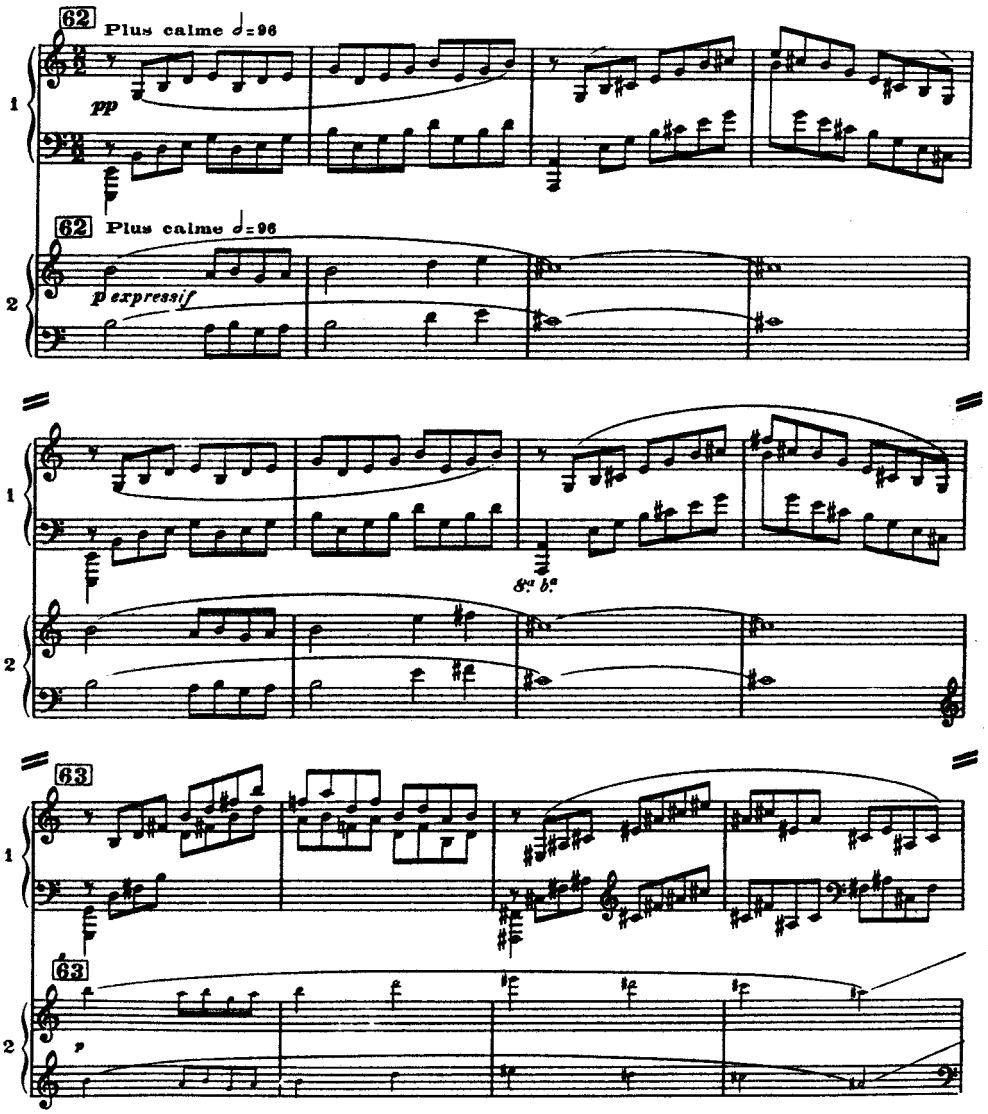
Has Poulenc *reformed*? Is this why the Other breaks out with such violent force at the end of the work?

Immediately following the D major triad, B♭ telescopes us back into the world of the primary axis as the B♭ to A voice-leading motion is contained within

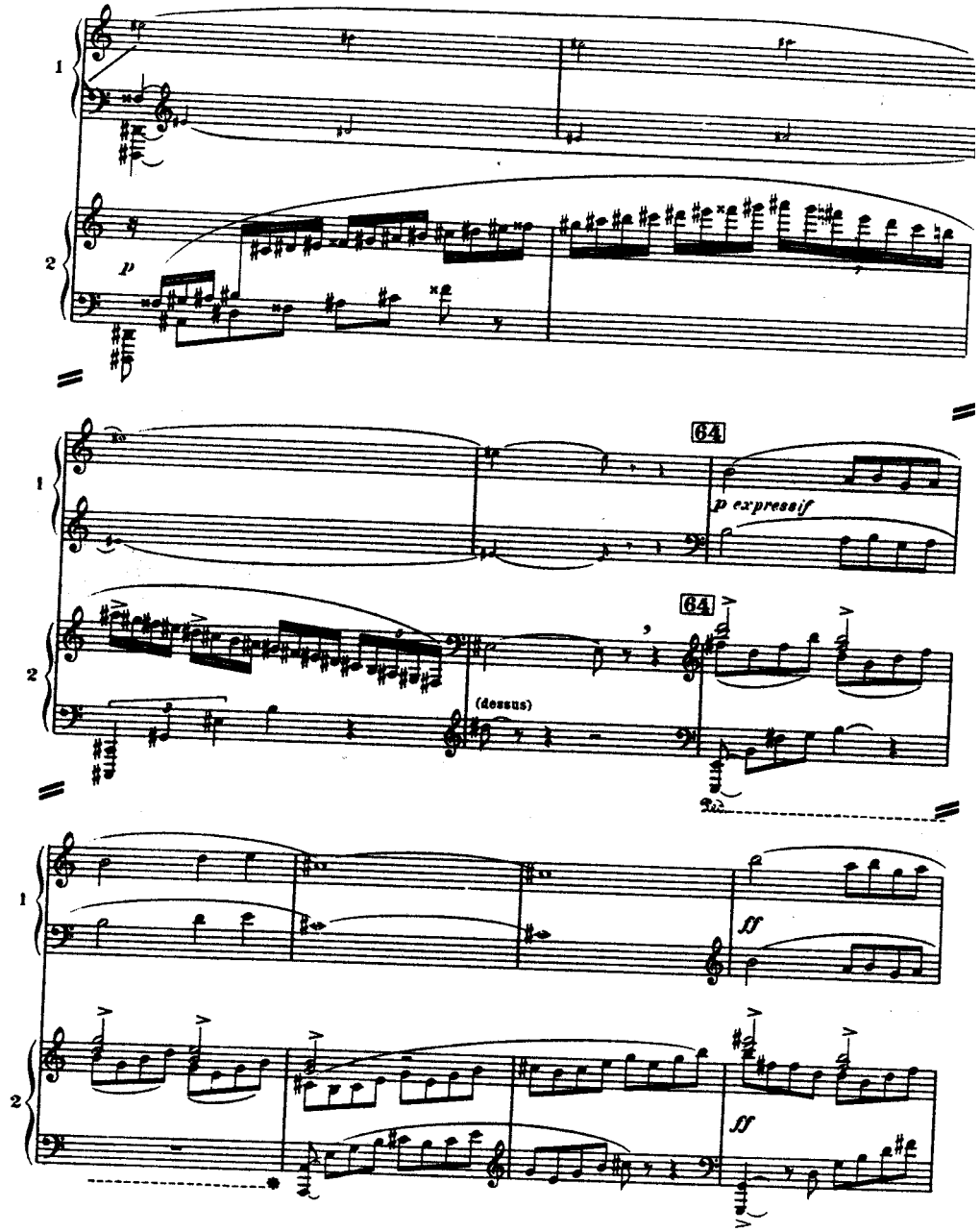
the axis. This axial voice leading returns once again in the Concerto: in the last two measures of the work, as shown in Example 4.10. These two chords, namely B♭ major and D minor, support the axial voice leading previously discussed. The chords are also symbolic on an even higher level in that they are the overlapping major and minor triads of the primary axis. With respect to axial polarity, the Concerto thus ends with D minor victorious over B♭ major since it is the last chord stated in the work. This is just one possible reading, however. One might argue that perhaps B♭ has the last word after all, possibly undermining this interpretation. A close inspection of the B♭ sonority in the penultimate measure reveals that the non-chord tone is none other than the subversive agent, now respelled as C♭. This enharmonic spelling cripples its earlier status as diatonic within the self-affirming key of D major; now it presses in on the pitch B♭, the lowered sixth scale degree of the parallel (self-negating?) minor mode. We can read this chord, along with its "foreign element," as embodying Poulenc's failed attempts to valorize the Other within himself, as the tonal association of B♭ recalls his failed regression into the primitive Other, and the association of B♮ depicts his failed attempts via the voice-leading strand of B-C#-D to come to terms with his gay identity. My interpretation, I must admit, keeps open the possibility for reading *both* D and B♭ as victors in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, in that both readings prioritize either the self (D) at the expense of the Other (B♭), or the

Other (B♭) at the expense of the self (D). Tonality underscores that never the twain shall meet for the highly ambivalent Poulenc-Janus.

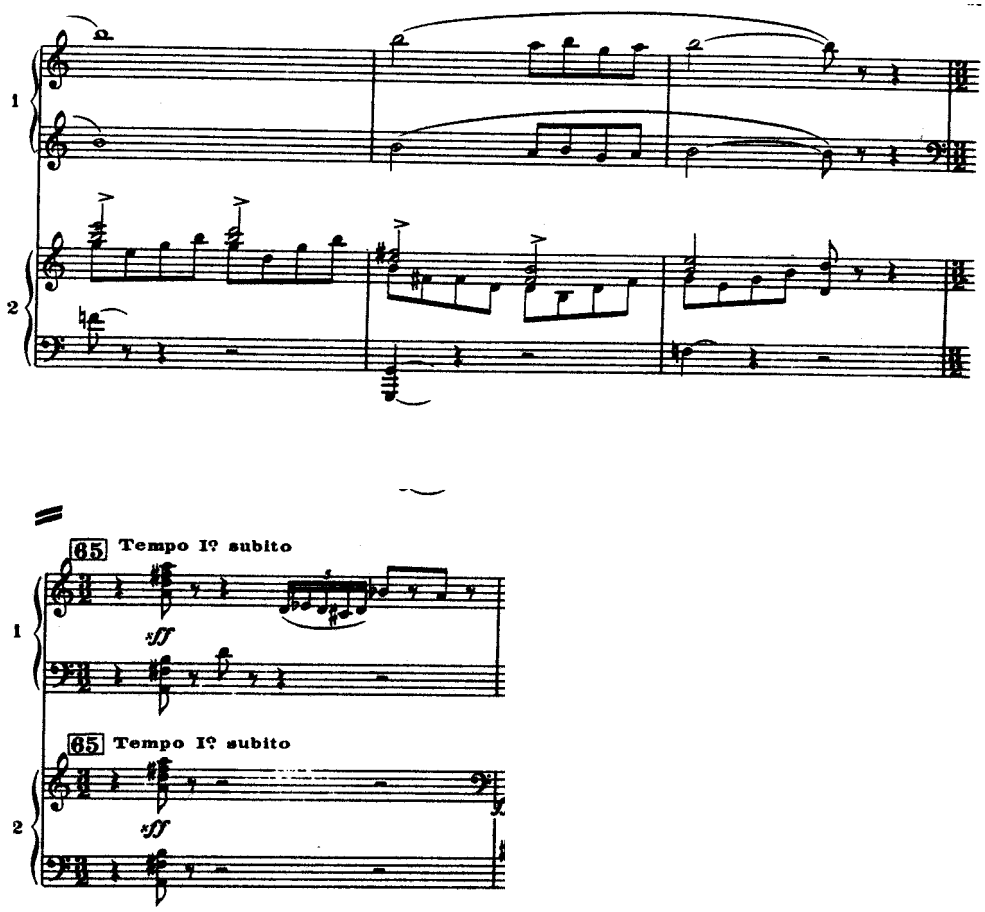
Example 4.11
Gamelan, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, III, R. 62-65



Example 4.11, continued



Example 4.11, continued



Homosexual Paradigm

Both of my gay readings have been based on several assumptions that Gerald Storzer describes as a *homosexual paradigm*.[114] It assumes a kind of schizophrenic division of Poulenc into a cultural and a primitive self. In *Aubade* and the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, Poulenc's primitive self is evoked by the oriental gamelan, a symbol that projects a sexual fantasy. The gamelan thus represents the *body*; it appears as pure (uncontaminated by culture) libidinal energy. Poulenc's cultural self, on the other hand, is equated with that of the piano and western stylistic practices, such as goal-directed voice-leading schemata in the Concerto and theme and variation techniques (i.e., masculine revision of the Fate Theme) in *Aubade.* Poulenc's schizophrenic employment of a cultural and a primitive self, therefore, underscores the archetypal mind/body split at work in the homosexual paradigm—*does the body rule the mind or does the mind rule the body*? It also conceives of cultural structures, patriarchal and Church values, as monolithic, static entities in which Poulenc is capable of reacting *against*. In both of my readings I have offered psychological reasons for the various choices made by the "fictional agents." My analytical readings can thus be seen as extensions of what Fred Maus eloquently describes as "musical

[114] See Gerald H. Storzer, "The Homosexual Paradigm in Balzac, Gide, and Genet," in *Homosexualities and French Literature*: *Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts*, George Stambolian & Elaine Marks, editors (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 186-209.

structure as dramatic structure." [115] My readings take the next conceptual step by unashamedly synthesizing biography with concepts of musical agency and drama; in other words I extend Maus's metaphor to "musical structure as biographical structure." My readings also assume that Poulenc is defined, in part, by his sexuality, which is something that is *constructed* by choice and free will. As we have seen, Poulenc's meaning of the gamelan changes throughout *Aubade* and the *Concerto for Two Pianos* depending on the choices (both biographical and musical) he makes to live out his sexuality. Finally, the sexual experience for Poulenc is conceived of as a source for musical creativity, a romantic notion where cultural will and primitive libidinal energies merge, thus affirming his creative selfhood where life blurs with art, where the two faces of Poulenc may ultimately become one.

[115] Maus, "Music as Drama," 128-130.

Conclusion

Poulenc's Ambivalence Reconsidered

By taking seriously the notion of ambivalence, the coexistence of two opposing drives toward the same object or person, I have shown that Poulenc's music often supports contradictory meanings, both musical and extra-musical. Unlike classical ambiguity, a critical term discussed in the first chapter, ambivalent "two-sidedness" defies closure; it is the signature of the open work. In my project I explore the notion of two-sidedness in three separate works from Poulenc's first and second stylistic periods, what I consider to be his *avant-garde* (1917-1922) and *neoclassic* (1923-1935) periods. The trajectory of my project traces ambivalence initially from the perspective of the avant-garde, cultural style of musical cubism (an example of *exterior ambivalence* stemming from cultural two-sidedness) to conflicting points of view within Poulenc himself, such as his conflicted views toward romanticism and his own sexual ambivalence. I consider these more personal contradictions to be examples of *interior ambivalences*.

In the second chapter I begin my study of Poulenc's exterior ambivalence within the context of artistic cross-fertilization in early twentieth-century Paris. I

consider the aesthetic of cubism as a starting point for my study of two-sidedness in his *Mouvement Perpétuels*, a piano work that so impressed Stravinsky that he had his own publishing company publish the then unknown Poulenc. The binary opposition of *representation* and *presentation* is examined in relation to Picasso's cubist paintings as well as Poulenc's early musical style, one that stems from the avant-garde musical style of Eric Satie. In both cultural practices of painting and music, objects are subjected to forces that cause a conceptual shift away from visual or tonal reality towards that of abstraction, encapsulating the intellectual concept of the object instead of the ephemeral sensations so closely tied to the impressionistic style. The cubist principles considered throughout the chapter include fragmentation via geometric schemes and musical patterns; synthesizing of objects via shifting visual planes and tonal perspectives; geometric and tonal logic; muted colors and a suppressed dynamic scheme; and plastic remnants found in both cubist paintings and the musical score itself. Further work to be done in the area of avant-garde music includes a reexamination of Poulenc as a cultural figure who embodies a "polite avant-garde" stance, one that is not concerned in the least with shocking the bourgeois; rather, Poulenc's music throughout his entire compositional career was meant to charm the general public. This reexamination could likewise move outside of France and consider additional "polite" twentieth-century composers, such as Benjamin Britten, Aaron

Copland, Leonard Bernstein, and Virgil Thomson, to name but a few. Music theorists have perhaps tended to ignore these composers because of their well-mannered tonal style.

In the third chapter I continue to explore exterior ambivalence by considering the two-sidedness of musical style predominant in early twentieth-century Paris as encoded in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*. The binary opposition of *high* and *low* culture is examined through Poulenc's use of style topics, such as Stravinsky, neoclassical, circus, dance hall, impressionistic, romantic, town band, and gamelan topics. I likewise consider the formal tonal structure of the movement consisting of tonal axes, after Joseph Straus's work with Stravinsky's neoclassic music; Straus suggests that most tonal axes consist of overlapping major and minor triads, a duality that simply begs for future enquiry into its ambivalent modal two-sidedness. In other words, the structure of the axis itself embodies a duality that is open ended, both major *and* minor. It would be worthwhile to explore in the future the significance of modal ambivalence associated with the tonal axis, taking into account historical perspectives of gender associations with the major and minor mode. This theoretical conceptualization of the bi-gendered axis could then be applied to Poulenc's working out of identity politics in works such as his ballet, *Aubade*, and his surrealist opera, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*. In the opera, Tiresias serves as the

archetypical figure for androgyny as well as bisexuality because of her flip-flopping of gender; she/he lives outside of the confines of a repressive patriarchy. Perhaps, like Tiresias, the ambivalent tonal axis can serve as a metaphor for defiance against the patriarchal order of musical structure itself.

In my study of Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos* I have laid the initial theoretical groundwork for future work to be done on Poulenc's use of tonal axes. I show how two tonal axes structure the first movement, a primary and a secondary axis, which are then shown to embody *high* and *low* cultural styles: namely, the primary axis is associated with high cultural styles, while the secondary axis is associated with low cultural styles. This integration of musical structure with musical expression via style topics unmasks another instance of encoded ambivalence in the concerto, a move away from the exterior and into an interior realm of ambivalence. This interiorization is made possible because of an unmasking, as it were, of "objective" tonal structures and musical topics.

I suggest that Poulenc's romantic masking of the secondary axis underscores his own ambivalence toward the *past* and points to his nostalgic yearning for romanticism despite the anti-romantic stance propagated by Jean Cocteau, the one-time aesthetic spokesperson for "Les Six." The theoretical frame of interior ambivalence contributes to the scholarly discourse of the composer/persona debate, one that is often regarded as a thorn in the side of

music studies because scholars often dismiss readings, or interpretations, as being too subjective, and therefore not "provable." The tools of music analysis have allowed me to lay a solid (structural) foundation on which to build compelling, humanistic readings of Poulenc's music.

In the fourth chapter I consider how music can encode Poulenc's own ambivalence toward his sexuality via the dramatic use of the gamelan. The critical readings in this chapter make a contribution to the new and exciting direction that music studies are currently taking as we are now exploring the relevance of gender and sexuality within music scholarship. Both *Aubade* and the *Concerto for Two Pianos* were written during a critical turning point in Poulenc's life, when old friends were abandoned and new ones were adopted, as he *attempted* to come to terms with the possibility of accepting a gay identity, one that would ultimately cause him much pain throughout his entire lifetime. I suggest that both works can be read as autobiographical allegories for gay self-acceptance. Poulenc shrouds this utopian possibility in both works with doubt, however, what I consider as musically encoded gay self-denial.

In my reading of the *Concerto for Two Pianos* I suggest ways in which his discourse on sexual ambivalence (or, gay self-acceptance versus self-denial) may ultimately stem from his coming to terms with the dogma of the Catholic Church. This marks the culmination of the trajectory of ambivalence I trace in my project,

what can be understood as the most inward *interior ambivalence* possible, that of the spirit. Benjamin Ivry writes that it is precisely because of the Church's anti-homosexual stance that Poulenc viewed gay sex as impure, therefore complicating his coming to terms with his gayness. Perhaps future Poulenc scholars will continue to explore the role of Poulenc's religious ambivalence in lieu of his homosexuality, a two-sidedness that could underlie many of his religious works. My gay reading of the *Concerto for Two Pianos* suggests that the musical material of the homosexual Other, as symbolized by the gamelan, is culled from the opening *Symphony of Psalms* quotation, thus binding the sacred with that of its opposite, the profane. My gay readings of interior ambivalence emphasize that we must not forget that music is an act of self-expression made by the composer. But even though Poulenc's music has allowed me to think about musical manifestations of his biography, it also serves as a springboard for telling stories about *our own lives*; stories that have remained silent in music criticism for far too long. It is because of Poulenc's ambivalences, particularly his interior ones, that I am deeply drawn to his music – we are human, after all, full of contradictory natures, feelings, and limitless forms of contradictory self-expressions. To be ambivalent is simply to be human.

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